

EQUIPPING CHURCH-BASED LEADERS
IN A SMALL, RURAL, INDEPENDENT CHURCH

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To the wife of my youth.
With love and thanksgiving.

In God's sight there are no little people
and no little places

--Francis Schaeffer, *No Little People*

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ABBREVIATIONS

BILD	Biblical Institute for Leadership Development
CBC	Community Bible Church of Strawberry Point, IA
SRI	Small, rural, independent (church)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the lessons learned in a lengthy pastorate in a small, rural, independent church regarding the equipping of leaders. It provides a working church-based model for equipping leaders that is informed by consideration of key theological issues, other contributions in the literature, and experience from a recent project of implementation of church-based equipping. Because most tools are produced with larger, urban/suburban, and connected churches in mind, this thesis focuses on the use of materials and approaches that are culturally appropriate for small, rural, independent church settings.

CHAPTER 1
THE NEED FOR EQUIPPING LEADERS
IN THE SMALL, RURAL, INDEPENDENT CHURCH

Introduction

“A small town is a good place to be from but not a good place to be.” About one year after finishing Dallas Theological Seminary, I was preparing to candidate to pastor Community Bible Church (CBC) in Strawberry Point, IA. Before I left Dallas, I visited an eye doctor for contact lenses. During the visit, he asked me what I did and I told him my plans. As an older man, he solemnly warned me against going to a rural church. He said it was a dead end occupation, and that all I would do is perform a few baptisms, weddings, and funerals and never accomplish anything of real value. I was shaken by his dismal depiction of where I might spend the rest of my life.

Fast forward to 2011. I have now pastored this small, rural, independent (SRI) church for a little over thirty years. I have wrestled at times with the significance of where I live and what I do. This is at times exacerbated when I sense others stating or implying that real significant ministries only take place in population centers or influential cities. Take for instance leadership training. Not only are most leadership materials produced by and for city church settings, there seems to be a subtle message that rural ministry is only a sort of training grounds for real ministry in a larger, more significant setting. The brochure for a 2008 small town pastors’ conference¹ advertised eleven speakers. The bio-sketch of seven of the eleven read as follows: “wife of former

¹ Ron Klassen, *Small-Town Pastors’ Conference, Jesus: The Quintessential Rural Minister* (Morton, Ill.: Rural Home Missionary Association), Promotional Pamphlet, April 28-30, 2008.

small town church planter; former small-town church planter; former small town pastor; former small town pastor; small-town pastor's kid; grew up in a small town; former country church pastor". It may have been an excellent conference, but the repeated word "former" in the brochure left an impression. This conference's team of speakers seemed to be stacked with "formers" rather than "farmers". Rural churches appear equivalent to the minor leagues for players waiting to go to the majors. In an era where size of the congregation, the staff, the building, and the budget picture success, the rural church fails to measure up to those standards.

A church history class in seminary stirred a longing in me to train leaders in the local church context. The lecture that day included a brief discussion about William Tennent. This 1700's Presbyterian pastor of Pennsylvania trained ministers of the gospel as a part of his pastoral ministry in what was eventually called "the log college". I remember clearly how excited I was to share this with my wife that evening as part of my dream for future pastoral ministry.

But now, thirty years later, I must admit that this longing gave way to the other demands of rural pastoring. Certainly others learn from aspects of modeling, but I have never developed any ordered process to equip faithful disciples to become leaders and conversations with other rural pastors have convinced me that this is the case with many of them as well.

If we are to reach rural America with the gospel, we must plant and establish maturing churches. If we are to see maturing churches in rural America, we must equip leaders in and for those churches. Rural churches need visionary leaders committed to equipping all disciples including leaders. When it comes to training leaders, this thesis

hopes to open a pathway to envision the SRI church as not only a good place to be from, but a good place to be.

Purpose for this Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the lessons learned in a lengthy pastorate in a SRI church regarding the equipping of leaders. It provides a working church-based model for equipping leaders through theological reflection, review of literature, and implementation of a pilot program. While all churches share many common experiences and challenges, some aspects of the SRI church ministry are unique and therefore demand a culturally appropriate approach. In light of this, this thesis will highlight the unique challenges faced by those who seek to equip leaders in a SRI church setting. It will suggest culturally appropriate materials and approaches that might be used in such settings. It will present how the SRI church might engage in Christ's mission to be fully established through not only equipping the saints, but equipping leaders. This thesis will provide a plan to equip leaders to not only serve Christ in the SRI church setting, but to also be prepared to extend the gospel and help plant and/or establish churches elsewhere.

The Need for this Thesis

In our modern era, those who desire to enter any aspect of serious church ministry normally look to a school for training, not the church. Such was not the case at the beginning. The apostle Paul certainly had a vision to develop leaders, but he planted churches, not schools. Neither Timothy nor Titus attended a school, yet both were

certainly well trained. Paul trained them in the very context in which they would minister, the church!

Schools can provide excellent exegetical and expositional training to teach and preach biblical texts, but they tend to do so in a context divorced from the rest of church life. Other aspects of church life cannot be replicated in a school. Church-based training, like that of Timothy and Titus, addresses a wider range of knowledge, wisdom, and skills necessary for church ministry.

There appears to be a groundswell of books, seminars, programs, and consultants on training church leaders. Just to illustrate this, a *Google* search for “church leadership training” on April 6, 2011 yielded 1,700,000 results. There is certainly a recognized need among the churches.

With this influx of tools for church leaders, we now have a beginning conversation regarding church-based training. We also have a growing selection of books aimed at the rural pastorate (see literature review, chapter 3). But specific tools for church-based leadership development in a SRI church setting seem to be missing. The leadership training books tend to come from the large, city church setting and view that setting as their audience, leaving the SRI church to fend for herself.

Structure of the Thesis

The topic of this thesis is addressed in the context of an actual SRI church and developed through a discussion of relevant theological issues and applications, a review of pertinent literature, the building and initial implementation of a comprehensive equipping program, and reflection on what has been learned and its contribution to other

churches and leaders. Having already stated the purpose and need for this thesis, chapter one will next define terms, show the challenges and benefits of SRI church ministry, and state the desired value of this work. Chapter two will lay out a brief foundational theology of leadership in the church followed by some issues of application that have emerged in our SRI church setting and how we have attempted to apply this theology. The literature review of chapter three will then note the contributions of key resources as well as the vacancy left for a work addressing a church-based approach for training leaders in a SRI church setting. Chapter four will present the project for launching a church-based program for training leaders in churches similar to CBC starting with assessment and concluding with the training process. Chapter five will seek to demonstrate what has been achieved and lay out the next strategic steps to be taken.

Definitions and Descriptions

Before entering the main body of this thesis, there are several crucial terms to be defined and described. These terms include leader, small, rural, independent, church, parachurch, church-based, and equip.

Leader

What is a leader? According to the dictionary, a leader is "...a person who has commanding authority or influence".² The most basic concept of the verb "to lead" is to "...guide on a way especially by going in advance". This is generalized to mean "...to

² Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. "Leader."

direct on a course or in a direction'.³ Leading well demands that the leader knows where he is going and that those who follow share a level of confidence that reaching the destination (literal or figurative) will yield positive results for the group.

Biblical examples of leaders are numerous. Moses serves as a good Old Testament example of a leader. Under God's direction, Moses led the people literally toward the land of promise and led them spiritually toward the worship and service of the true and living God. The apostle Paul serves as a good New Testament example as he sought to lead people to believe the gospel and then follow him in following Christ.

Biblical leaders are marked by three aspects: moral qualifications, God-given gifts, and accountability before God. The priority of moral qualifications is seen in the leaders Moses appointed in Exodus 18 and in the elders chosen to lead the church in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3. All the qualifications in both settings have strong moral overtones. God grants gifts to enhance the effectiveness of some leaders, but the moral qualifications remain primary. A gifted but morally unqualified leader will effectively lead people in the wrong direction. Accountability before God for leaders is evident everywhere in Scripture. In the Old Testament, the kings of Israel were held responsible for their leadership. In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews declares it plainly: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account" (Heb 13:17).

Many authors have offered definitions and descriptions of leaders. J. Oswald Sanders quotes Lord Montgomery as saying, "Leadership is the capacity and will to rally

³ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. "Lead."

men and women to a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence.”⁴ Sanders also notes that it was D.E. Hoste, general director of the China Inland Mission, who in response to a question about leadership qualification observed, “It occurs to me that perhaps the best test of whether one is a qualified leader is to find out whether anyone is following him.”⁵ David Hesselgrave quotes anthropologist Philip Bock: “...leaders are those who have a role involving legitimate exercise of authority over other persons”.⁶ But perhaps Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancioni most clearly define a Christian leader as “...a servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction”.⁷

In summary, leaders in the church are spiritually mature men and women whom others follow to make progress at fulfilling God’s purpose for them both as individuals and as a church body.

What kind of leaders need to be equipped for church ministry? Missionaries, pastors, elders, and deacons come to mind immediately. But rather than thinking only of official church offices, both the philosophical and practical aspects of this project will expand the focus to a community of leaders and followers. For instance, older women are exhorted by Paul through Titus to behave in certain ways so that they “... may encourage (train) the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible,

⁴ Bernard L. Montgomery, *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery* (Cleveland: World, 1958), 70 quoted in J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 31.

⁵ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 34.

⁶ David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 258, quoting Philip K. Bock, *Modern Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction*, 2d ed. (New York: Knopf, 1974), 118.

⁷ Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leaders at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 20.

pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored” (Titus 2:5).

Discipleship and training were never intended to be the sole responsibility of the official leaders of the church. There is a leadership continuum in which everyone is both following and leading someone. An older woman might be training a younger woman who is training a teenage girl who is influencing a seven year old girl by her example. A pastor could be training an elder who is training a younger man who is training a younger boy as a disciple of Christ. This leadership continuum is seen most clearly when Paul exhorts Timothy: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). Continuum thinking is consistent with the fact that leadership training is actually a continuation of discipleship which ought to be the norm for every member of the church.

Small

What is a small church? The dictionary informs us that small means “...having comparatively little size or slight dimensions” or “minor in influence, power, or rank”.⁸ The operative word in the first definition is “comparatively”. When it comes to calling churches small, the description is in the eye of the beholder. Since we cannot turn to the Bible for an absolute definition of small, I will describe a church as small that has a membership of under two hundred. This is based on the conventional figures that small

⁸ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. “Small”.

churches are under 200 members, medium churches range from 200 to 400 members, and large churches are over 400.⁹

Rural

Rural is defined as being "...of or relating to the country, country people or life, or agriculture".¹⁰ The USDA has an even more specific definition: "According to official U.S. Census Bureau definitions, rural areas comprise open country and settlements with fewer than 2500 residents. Urban areas comprise larger places and densely settled areas around them".¹¹ As an example of a rural community, Strawberry Point, IA has a population of 1,231 (as of July, 2009), a median resident age of 40.1 years, and an estimated median household income in 2009 of \$45,429.¹² The town has one public school (consolidated – shared with two other towns), one grocery store, one hardware store, one gas station/convenience store, several restaurants, and a post office. Neighboring towns range in size from 200 to 5000. While these towns differ from this setting, they would all still be described as rural. The economy is primarily farm based. The point here is that this project is aimed at churches in smaller, country settings detached from major population hubs.

⁹ Mark A. Copeland, "The Benefits of a Small Church", <http://executableoutlines.com> (accessed February 21, 2011).

¹⁰ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. "Rural."

¹¹ "Measuring Rurality: What is Rural", www.usda.gov/briefing/rurality/WhatIsRural (accessed February 22, 2011).

¹² Strawberry Point, Iowa, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Strawberry-Point-Iowa.html>, Onboard Informatics (accessed February 22, 2011).

Independent

When defined in non-church settings, independent means "... not subject to control by others: self-governing".¹³ In church settings it normally refers to non-denominational churches that are self-governing. A typical description can be observed on an independent church web site: "An independent church is a group of believers in Jesus Christ who holds to the historic Christian faith. During the early 1900's many churches began to deny the truths in the Bible. As a result, leaders and layman formed new churches not connected with any denomination."¹⁴ The independent church movement solved the problem of denominational drift into liberal theology, but it created some unintended problems by breaking free of cooperative networking for support, missions, and leadership development.

Church

After defining church as a building for worship and the clergy, Webster then notes that a church is "... a body or organization of religious believers".¹⁵ When we enter the world of the New Testament, we discover more specifically that a church is a local assembly of baptized believers in Jesus Christ who are spiritually cared for by a team of elders who are assisted by a team of deacons.

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.' When they had appointed elders

¹³ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. "Independent."

¹⁴ www.calvaryindchurch.org (accessed February 18, 2011).

¹⁵ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. "Church."

for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:21-23)

A normal reading of the New Testament demonstrates God's intent to gather His redeemed people into churches where they would be equipped to serve Him (Eph 4:11-16). The epistles are addressed either to churches or to those who planted and established churches. In Revelation, when Christ speaks through His Spirit to those who have ears to hear, He speaks to the churches (Rev 2 and 3).

Parachurch

The term parachurch is not found in Merriam-Webster's Dictionary. The Greek preposition *para* means near or beside. Therefore, a parachurch group is an organization that comes along beside the church typically to perform some service either for or instead of the church. In a private conversation, one parachurch leader described it like a specialty team of a football squad, such as the kickoff team. They perform a special duty for a specific situation.

Church-Based

BILD International claims two basic principles that undergird its ministry philosophy. These principles capture what it means to be church-based:

1. The Church is at the center of God's redemptive work during this age, and God has revealed an administration for the Church (Ephesians 2:11-3:12).
2. Every aspect of Christian ministry (evangelism, discipleship, missions, theological education, theology, etc.) needs to find its identity and purpose in building up the Church and to align itself with the revealed administration.¹⁶

As applied to equipping leaders, Jeff Reed further describes this church-based paradigm:

¹⁶ BILD International: Philosophy of Ministry, <http://bild.org/philosophy/overview> (accessed April 8, 2011).

The conclusion then is that leadership development in the early churches was church-based at its core. The church-based training of the early church was clearly understood as a flexible leadership development strategy rooted in the life and ministry of local churches, in which “gifted men” (Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 2:2) entrusted more and more of the ministry to other faithful men while they themselves remained deeply involved in the process of establishing churches. This type of paradigm we are calling church-based.¹⁷

Church-based as a term speaks of training that keeps the church as the central focus of all training and ministry.

Equip

Just what term best captures what we humans do to prepare others to lead? Do we teach them, disciple them, train them, educate them, shape them, help in their formation, develop them, or equip them? While good arguments might be made for any of these, I have chosen “equip” as my primary term (though I will on occasion use these other terms as well). The English term means “to furnish for service or action by appropriate provisioning or to make ready, prepare”.¹⁸ This is quite close to the meaning of the Greek term *katartismos* used in the New Testament: “...put in order, restore to its former condition, put to rights”. The term can be used of restoring something that is damaged (mending nets in Matt 4:19 or restoring a sinning brother in Gal 6:1) or putting something or someone in condition by making them complete (Heb 13:21 and Luke 6:40).¹⁹

Choosing the term “to equip” seeks to communicate first of all human cooperation with the Spirit of God. Note what Paul says of the Ephesian elders: “For I did not shrink

¹⁷ Jeff Reed, “Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm” in *Leaders and the Early Church* (Ames: LearnCorp, L.C., 1992), reading “r”, 9.

¹⁸ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. “Equip.”

¹⁹ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 4th revised ed., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), s.v. “katartismos.”

from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:27,28). While Paul declared the whole purpose of God to these elders, it was the Holy Spirit who made them overseers. The same cooperative work that we observe in the church at large is at work in equipping leaders. “What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth” (1 Cor 3:5,6).

Secondly, and equally important, the term *to equip* communicates more than a mere transfer of facts and ideas. While teaching is certainly a primary ingredient in equipping leaders, it must remain only one aspect. There are aspects of shepherding a flock that will never be learned by lecture. Biblical facts are foundational, but there is so much more to it. How do older women teach younger women “...to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands ...” (Titus 2:4,5)? While word studies on “love” and “being subject” are foundational, there is the life on life aspect of observing, asking, failing, praying, and asking again that comes into play. How do the older women cooperate with the Spirit of God to aid younger women toward these skills in marriage? How do church leaders cooperate with the Spirit of God in developing others to lead in Christ’s church? These are the things of which it has been said must “be caught rather than taught”.

Last and certainly not least, the term *equip* is a biblical word. Paul uses this term to reveal the responsibility of leaders toward all members of the body of Christ. “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as

pastors and teachers, for the *equipping* of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ..." (Eph 4:11,12). Since potential and current leaders are both part of the body of the saints, Paul's term *equip* communicates what leaders are responsible to accomplish in their lives. Paul envisioned the church as a body and the body grows "...according to the proper working of each individual part..." (Eph 4:16). In context, Paul's term once again joins the absolute necessity of Christ's work as head of the body and the absolute necessity for human leaders to equip others under Christ if the body is to function as God designed it.

Having observed the purpose and need for this thesis followed by defining and describing the terms, it is now necessary to think about the challenges and benefits of the SRI church in the endeavor of equipping leaders.

The Challenges of the SRI Church

The SRI church faces some unique challenges that must be considered if leaders are to be equipped in this setting.

Travel Distances

People travel great distances to come to the church meetings and training events so that weekly multiple trips to a central location become a challenge. A map-quest investigation of our leaders and members proves the point. Our five elders travel distances of eight, thirteen, sixteen, four, and eight miles one way to reach our church building. Our deacons are even more spread out, traveling distances of seven, twenty

nine, fifteen, twenty, fourteen, twenty five, and sixteen miles. The following table reflects distances traveled by the people (including the elders and deacons) of our church.

Table 1: CBC Households: Travel Distances

Distance traveled	Number of households
In town (less than one mile)	7
2-5 miles	3
6-10 miles	6
11-15 miles	6
16-20 miles	7
21-25 miles	3
26-30 miles	2
More than 30 miles	2

Unlike the area denominational churches where for instance the Methodists from a certain community attend the community Methodist church, most rural, independent evangelical churches have no sense of parish or geographical community. Evangelical theology in general plus specific beliefs and practices draw people from great distances when a church approximates that family's beliefs and practices. We have had people come who are drawn by expositional preaching, Sunday School, acceptance of home-schooling, plurality of elders, believers' baptism, as well as other issues.

Church-Hopping

Dissatisfied believers leave one evangelical church and become part of another making the travel distances even greater. Because evangelicals hold to their beliefs and practices with fervor, specific beliefs and practices will not only attract some, they will repel others. While we have attempted to conduct a class which introduces newer people to our church's beliefs and practices, we have still experienced families who have been part of us for quite some time finally decide that they do not care for elder rule church government, our views and practices on the roles of men and women in the church and home, our beliefs and practices of church discipline, issues surrounding divorce, or some other specific aspect of church life. We are currently a church of about 35 family units. Based on my personal records, doctrine and practice controversies have played a significant role in the departure of roughly 42 family units in the past 30 years of our church's history. While such departures also happen in city churches, each family unit here represents a larger percentage of the whole church so the impact of such departures seems greater.

Financial Pressures

Financial pressures in the rural community lead to more wives working out of the home. Nearly half of the wives of our church families work outside the home. In addition to this, most of the wives of farmers are deeply involved in the farm work. The impact of this shows itself in any move to gather the believers on any occasion other than Sunday. Small groups of any sort now seem like a burden to bear rather than a ministry to be

appreciated. Any form of training outside the boundaries of the Sunday meeting challenges the availability of both time and energy.

Rural Lifestyle: Annual Issues

In a farming community, specific times of the year become extremely demanding. Most farmers work long hours nearly all year long, but spring and fall field work demand even greater effort. The variability of weather and machinery breakdowns create an intensity perhaps matched in no other occupation. One farmer even told me that farmers do not make good disciples because of the demands of the work involved. Our elders and deacons meetings during this time of year are scheduled subject to weather. If our elders and deacons who farm are able to plant or harvest, we let them do so and reschedule our meeting.

Rural Lifestyle: Daily Issues

Mutually workable meeting times are difficult to schedule. Dairy farmers normally cannot get places before 7:30 pm nor can they schedule early morning meeting times. Those who produce hay must literally “make hay while the sun shines”. Livestock farmers face the normal challenges of chores with the added challenges of the calving or lambing season.

A second challenge to scheduling is the place the school plays in the rural community. At small, rural schools, it is not unusual for students with moderate to excellent athletic skills to participate in two or three sports per year. These same students often participate in competitive speech, musicals, band/choir, and plays. Committed

Christian parents who want to be a part of their children's lives can easily have two nights per week filled by school activities.

A third issue that also contributes to difficulty scheduling training events is that of commuting. Our church has a few engineers that want to stay in the community for family or other reasons so they commute to larger cities such as Waterloo and Cedar Rapids. Their commute is well over an hour each way, making it difficult to include them in either morning or evening gatherings.

Young Adults and Higher Education

There is virtually no college/career group in a rural church. Nearly all of the high school graduates leave for college or work elsewhere and rarely move back. In addition to this, there is very little influx of young people who come here to replace them. While young adults alone are not the whole church, it is this age group which seems most open to intensive training and is most open to career changing decisions. Our pool of young, potential leaders remains quite small.

Rural Life and Academic Learning

Academic learning is not valued as highly in rural areas as in cities with colleges and universities. Of the population over 25 years old in Strawberry Point, IA, 88% complete high school while only 15.4% complete a bachelor's degree or higher. Those with graduate or professional degrees comprise only 5.9% of the population.²⁰

²⁰ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Strawberry-Point-Iowa.html> (accessed February 22, 2011).

Training classes that include reading and writing assignments will be viewed by some as too academic, especially by those who struggled through high school English. As Glenn Daman notes,

The small church struggles because often people are not avid readers. Any training program, by necessity, will require reading several books to address all the breadth of the ministry. However, the pastor often gets discouraged as he purchases books and assigns them to the board only to find after months of prodding, the members still have not read the book.²¹

While on the job training is part of the New Testament paradigm for leadership training, there is evidence in both precept and practice that potential leaders also received serious theological training and mentoring. Spiritual leaders must not only be able to teach but able to refute false teachers and false teaching. Paul exhorted Timothy to teach those who would teach others. Such serious, ordered learning is not always well received in the rural church.

Population Shift

Small towns are slowly dying out; therefore, the pool for potential leaders is shrinking with the population. Towns that were once thriving centers of commerce for the rural community now struggle for mere survival. Strawberry Point, Iowa has lost 11.1% of its population since 2000.²² Some small towns in Northeast Iowa that at one time had five or more grocery stores now can no longer support even one. The “big box store” paradigm has contributed to the demise of the small town shops and support businesses.

²¹ Glenn Daman, “The Country Shepherd: The Importance of Leadership Training – Part 2,” Center for Leadership Development, <http://www.smallchurchleaders.org/the-country-shepherd/2009> (accessed April 6, 2011).

²² <http://www.city-data.com/city/Strawberry-Point-Iowa.html> (accessed February 22, 2011).

Couple this with the increased size of farms which means fewer farmers, the “pool” of potential leaders shrinks proportionately.

Limited Funding

Economic depression limits the financial ability of the church to purchase materials or participate in leadership training events elsewhere. Just as was the case with setting aside the time for training leaders, so setting aside funds is problematic. Small budgets are already stretched to cover what are considered the essentials and equipping leaders is not necessarily considered to be one of them.

Single-Staff Ministry

Small, rural churches rarely have a multi-staff ministry. Training will be spearheaded by the same man who preaches, counsels, performs weddings and funerals, staffs the Sunday school, participates in board meetings, and performs various other administrative duties. Training leaders in a local church is important but normally not urgent. Urgency is only felt when current leaders resign, get sick, die, or make poor moral decisions. Otherwise, current ministry concerns tend to consume the focus and efforts of the present leadership team.

Therefore, if leadership training is to take place, someone must champion the cause. That someone will most likely be the pastor. Plurality of staff pastors in rural churches is rare. So by default, the task of training present and future leaders falls to the single paid staff pastor who already cannot hope to fulfill his own expectations for ministry, let alone those of his elders and church members.

The Benefits of the SRI Church

In spite of the challenges to be faced in equipping leaders in the SRI church, there are some definite benefits. While some of these may be more tied to smallness, rurality, or independence, others might relate to two of the three or even all three.

Informality

Being small and rural contributes to informality as opposed to polish and professionalism. Not long ago, several of the media preachers called this excellence. While we certainly desire to offer God our best, this often was applied by having polished buildings and seemingly flawless services. Such meetings can easily wander into the arena of performance. But in small, rural churches, the church views leaders less professionally than its urban counterpart. Greater population centers demand greater performances and professionalism. We expect a greater performance at Carnegie Hall than at a small town talent show. While this does not excuse shoddy work, it does enable greater latitude in giving experience to the developing leader. The budding preacher/teacher who might be given the opportunity to preach/teach in the small, rural setting might be passed by when the standard demanded by the setting is polish and professionalism.

Accountability

By nature the small, rural church naturally provides accountability. Urban anonymity does not work well here. While gossip may be more of a problem here, people do tend to know what goes on in the life of their neighbor. Your absence at church

meetings is more likely to be noticed in this setting. As Glenn Daman of Village Missions has stated, “When someone is absent from the church, people will call them to find out where they have been and if there is a problem. This is not done through a formal ‘follow-up’ program, but informally because of the relational connections people have.”²³

This natural accountability plays a large role in leadership development in rural settings. The elder qualification of having a good reputation in the community is very much in play here. Just as in the book of Ruth when the whole community of Bethlehem knew Naomi’s story when she returned from Moab, so everyone tends to know the stories of others in small, rural communities. This favors genuineness in the leadership development process. While scandals can happen anywhere, they are harder to hide in a small town.

Stronger Sense of Intergenerational Family

Paul speaks to the issues of intergenerational church family in the pastoral epistles. To Titus, he speaks of lifestyle issues for older men and women as well as younger men and women. His intension that the older women model and teach behavior that fits with sound doctrine is especially made clear (Titus 2). To Timothy, his exhortation becomes even more family oriented as he tells Timothy to treat the older men as fathers, the older women as mothers, the younger men as brothers, and the younger women as sisters (1 Tim 5). These intergenerational family ties happen more naturally in the small, rural church. Ron Klassen, RHMA Executive Director, wrote,

²³ Glenn Daman, “Strengths of the Small Church – Part 2: Built in Accountability,” Center for Leadership Development, <http://www.smallchurchleaders.org/the-country-shepherd/2007> (accessed April 6, 2011).

Picture the family arriving on Sunday morning in the larger church. The kids run to different Sunday School classes. One goes to the nursery. After Sunday School one goes to children's church, another to junior church, the third remains in the nursery, and Dad and Mom go to the adult worship service. When the morning is over, they get back together in their van and head home. With everyone having their own "sub-church" one has to wonder: When did anyone in this church last have a conversation with someone 20 years younger or older than he?²⁴

Klassen concludes that this is not typically what happens in the small, rural church.

Sense of Being Needed

Certain aspects of service are present in all churches no matter the size. In a smaller church, the pool of those available to serve is smaller. Therefore, a higher percentage of small church members find avenues of service open to them. This opens greater opportunity for developing leaders. For example, in larger churches some who are qualified to serve as elders will not be able to serve because they must limit the number of elders. This situation would be rare in a small church setting.

Free of Large Population Problems

Rural areas are by definition free from the problems that plague large cities. While driving long distances to church meetings is a problem in rural areas, traffic problems are not. This also eliminates some of the stress that accompanies urban families who face long commutes that might render people unavailable during the workweek.

²⁴ Ron Klassen, "Something for Everyone," Rural Home Missionary Association, <http://www.rhma.org/> (accessed April 6, 2011).

Freedom to Choose Church Network

While there are downsides to being an independent church, you are free to create your own church network. You are not required to participate in an unhelpful network of churches that demand funds, resources, personnel, and time to no real benefit. You are free to participate or not participate with other churches according to your church's desires and convictions. The danger of course is to merely maintain independence and fail to learn from and contribute to other churches.

Freedom to Choose Missions Philosophy and Connections

While this can also become a danger, the independent local church is not entangled in missionary pursuits that it finds unbiblical or unwise. The church is able to establish its own understanding of the mission of the church and how it should be involved in Christ's commission to make disciples throughout the world. The church can then carefully partner with like-minded churches and/or mission organizations to participate in the progress of the gospel. This also allows a church maximum opportunity to consider training and sending some of her own leaders to minister in Christ's work elsewhere.

In summary, while there are many challenges (not to forget the benefits) to equip leaders in the SRI church setting, the biblically mandated goal to do so must sustain the effort. The relative ease or difficulty of a biblical task in a particular setting should not determine our obedience. If difficulty would have determined outcome in the first century, no church would have been established in the first place.

The Value of this Thesis

This thesis aims to unite two things of great value and potential: church-based leadership training and the SRI church. The SRI churches offer great potential to the progress of the gospel. But they must launch serious leadership development.

Unfortunately, this has not been a priority for these churches. Based on the literature, personal conversations with SRI church pastors, and the scarcity of SRI church leaders at church-based leadership training events (such as those held by BILD International), very few SRI churches are seriously engaged in this kind of leadership development.

This thesis offers a model for SRI churches to seriously engage in equipping church-based leaders. To do so might not only bring spiritual maturity to the SRI churches, but also unleash the great potential in these churches into Christ's work of establishing His church throughout the world. This model could (as summarized in chapter five) reconstruct the pastoral role in SRI churches, introduce theological education for everyone, open doors for biblical assessment, breathe new purpose into old traditions, provide a functional equipping template (beliefs, practice, and service) for equipping leaders, bring pastors and elders into a unified vision of the church's mission, provide networking between churches to train leaders, and equip leaders who can both extend and establish the church.

CHAPTER 2

A FOUNDATIONAL THEOLOGY AND ISSUES OF APPLICATION

Parents often tell their children to think before they act. This good advice applies to the church as well as to children. The church should think before she acts. All too often, the church has been willing to function at a “check-list” level when thinking about the church and her leaders. For example, should the church merely choose elders with no further thought because the Bible says the church should have elders? Should not the church think theologically before she acts? Why do the Scriptures say a church should have elders? What is the function of elders? How do elders relate to Christ’s headship over the body? How are they to relate to the other people in the body? The church needs a foundational theology regarding the church and her leaders to inform her thinking before she acts.

To help the church think theologically, this chapter begins with a brief foundational theology regarding the church and her leaders. The chapter then moves on to explore some issues of application encountered by one SRI church as she has sought to put this theology into practice.

A Foundational Theology

Imagine someone trying to construct an airplane. Suppose that they have all the parts but little understanding of the total plan and no knowledge of flying. So it is when young, inexperienced students attempt to write a theology of church leadership and ministry. With very little experience in actual church ministry, we zealously construct

theologies and write papers that soar high above all the problems we see in the modern church. After we begin serving in the church, we experience turbulence and equipment failure. We begin trying to make “in-flight” repairs and discover how difficult that is. Meanwhile, the next generation of inexperienced theologians shakes their heads as they watch us fly and set to work building the new and better plane (writing a theology and practice of church leadership).

Only recently did I discover and read Larry Richards’s book *A Theology of Church Leadership*.¹ He published this work about the time I would have been completing seminary (1980). Whether or not Richards was the first to identify and spell out this theology of leadership is not of primary importance. I was astounded at how Richards had succinctly stated what I have been seeking to practice during my entire pastoral experience. While I differ with him on several interpretations and applications, Richards’ theological foundation (Part 1) systematically summarizes my own basic understanding of the church and her leaders.

Part 1, “Theological Foundation: The Church and Its Leadership”, contains ten chapters. The first five focus on a foundational theology of the church while the second five emphasize a basic theology of church leadership. These ten chapter titles, the accompanying first page summaries, and the foundational Scripture passages would serve as an excellent starting point for agreement and discussion for any church leadership team. Since this is a biblical theology, it remains the same for the SRI church as well as the large, city, denominational church with differences only in application.

¹ Lawrence O. Richards and Clyde Hoeldtke, *A Theology of Church Leadership*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

Christ Is Head: The Basic Reality

Richards accurately identifies Christ's headship of the church as the most basic reality for each church leader to know and practice (Eph 1:20-23; 4:15).² Church leaders must recognize individually and collectively that Christ is actually the Head and Leader of the church. Christ must not be thought of as Head in title only (like the queen of England) while real authority resides in the human leaders (like the English parliament).

Christ's headship over His body is properly speaking the most foundational truth that any leader must understand, remember, and live out. Paul introduces it early in his epistle to the Ephesians where He is spoken of as "...head over all things to the church which is His body" (Eph 1:22). Later, Paul returns to this when writing of the gifted men given to equip the saints for their work of ministry in the body, the goal being that every part grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ (Eph 4:15). Christ is the head. The human leader is not. Any responsibility the leader has in the body has been given to him by Christ. The church belongs to Christ. He has the first and last word to and about the church.

A Living Organism: Key to Self-Understanding

Leaders must give full place to the nature of the church as an organism.³ It is never to be reduced to a mere organization. The body metaphor communicates the organic nature of the church with Christ as her living head (Eph 4:12-16; 1 Cor 12:12-31).

² Richards, *A Theology* (chap 1), 15-30.

³ Richards, *A Theology* (chap 2), 31-44.

This second reality grows out of the same word picture as the first. It is the corollary to the first: every member is equally essential to the proper working of the body as a whole. This should dispel any thought of the leader being more important than others in the body. Paul addresses this directly in 1 Corinthians 12:

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. (12:18-22)

One member of the body cannot tell another that they are unnecessary or less important. They are all equally necessary, specially placed by God, and intimately connected with the head from whom all receive their directives.

While God is the one who determined that there would be human leaders in the church, He is the one who revealed these two truths so that those human leaders would remember their proper place in the body. They are not the head nor are they more important than any other member of the body.

Toward Maturity: The Body Grows

In the New Testament, growth refers primarily to the internal development of the body toward maturity.⁴ While there is obviously a divine element to such growth, God's Spirit has gifted leaders to equip the saints so that each member functions as it should in helping the body grow (Eph 4:11-16).

⁴ Richards, *A Theology* (chap 3), 45-60.

Incarnation: The Church in Mission

“The church as the body of Christ does not exist for itself. When the church is gathered, its focus may be on the internal life and growth of the body. But when scattered – when in touch with the world – the body of Christ exists to carry out the continuing mission of Jesus.”⁵ We are to continue the mission begun by Jesus while He was on earth (John 17:18). In Acts, Luke refers to his gospel (Luke) as the first account about “... all that Jesus began to do and teach...” (Acts 1:2). Jesus continues to act through His church as recorded in Acts.⁶

Theological Implications of the Incarnation

Instead of seeking to control the church, leaders must practice supernaturalism, release, and ministry (1 Pet 5:1-5). Richards correctly observes that modern evangelical church leaders have become managers who create and maintain ministries in the church instead of equipping and releasing the saints to do their work of ministry.⁷

The Task of Leadership: A Healthy Body

“The emerging picture of the local church leader, then, is not that of the manager of an enterprise or a decision maker, but of one who with the wisdom gained by personal experience builds an intimate relationship with others whom he cares for and tends with a view toward their growth and maturity.”⁸ A leader’s primary role is to help others follow

⁵ Richards, *A Theology*, 60.

⁶ Richards, *A Theology* (chap 4), 61-74.

⁷ Richards, *A Theology* (chap 5), 75-88.

⁸ Richards, *A Theology*, 92.

their real Leader (Eph 4:12; John 21:15-17). This has profound effects on how the leadership team exercises authority. Like Christ, a leader must become the servant of all.⁹

The Identity of the Leaders: Servants

Leaders are not lords (Matt 20:25-28; 1 Pet 5:1-5). Like all other disciples, leaders must serve (John 13:12-17).¹⁰ Even when opposed, the leader must gently instruct, not quarrel. He must remember that ultimately God is the one who grant repentance (2 Tim 2:22-24) and causes growth (1 Cor 3:6).

The Leader's Method: Modeling

Leaders are to watch both their lives and their doctrine (1 Tim 4:16). Qualifications for elders and deacons focus on character, not gifts (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4). Leaders must model the truth in their lives so that their lives illustrate the truth being taught.¹¹

The Leader's Method: Teaching

Since leaders are to watch both their lives and their teaching (1 Tim 4:16), Paul addresses both. The teaching of each local church must grow out of what the apostles themselves taught and wrote. Leaders must be faithful to the teaching of the apostles and

⁹ Richards, *A Theology* (chap 6), 89-102.

¹⁰ Richards, *A Theology* (chap 7), 103-114.

¹¹ Richards, *A Theology* (chap 8), 115-126.

then pass on the truth to the next generation of leaders.¹² This communication must certainly address doctrine but must also include life issues that are consistent with the doctrine (Titus 2:1-15).

The Leader's Goal: Edification

“The assumption is that the goal of one who has authority is to cause others to do his will. But this is never the goal of the spiritual leader in the body of Christ. The Christian leader always seeks to bring others, and the whole local body, to a responsive relationship with Jesus Christ. Our goal is to help others see, come to know, and do His will.”¹³ Once again, we must guard ourselves from taking on the role of head. We must not judge behavior based on our views. We must lead others to respond to the revealed will of God (Rom 14) which in fact is edification.¹⁴

Having reflected briefly on a biblical theology of church leadership, this chapter will now look at issues encountered as one SRI church has attempted to live out this basic theology. The goal is to produce a multilevel leadership training template for CBC that benefits other similar churches. This segment of the project will isolate eight issues that have surfaced during nearly 30 years SRI church ministry. After identifying these issues, the conclusions reached at CBC will be presented in the context of the biblical texts and seminal articles and books that have informed and influenced these conclusions. After all, theology happens best as church leaders repeatedly move between the word of God, life in the church, and the reflections of others on both.

¹² Richards, *A Theology* (chap 9), 127-136.

¹³ Richards, *A Theology*, 138.

¹⁴ Richards, *A Theology* (chap 10), 137-150.

Issues of Application

When applying this theology in a SRI church, a host of issues present themselves. Many of these issues grow primarily out of being independent. There is no denominational handbook to clarify local leadership structure, the pastor's role, or how the church must participate in the denomination's missions' program. The Scriptures themselves supply general principles with little specific application. The independent church must interpret and apply Scripture (do biblical theology) instead of relying on a policy book. While this can be very liberating, it can also consume vast amounts of the church leaders' time and energy.

I have chosen eight issues our church has wrestled with on its way to practicing what the Bible teaches about the church and her leaders. The list includes the following:

1. The Role of the Pastor
2. The Plurality of Elders
3. The Role of Elders
4. The Role of Deacons
5. Choosing Leaders
6. Training Leaders
7. Missions and the Rural Church
8. Leadership, Women, and Service in the Church

Each issue will be approached by noting a series of related questions, commenting briefly on the foundational Scriptures, placing the issue in our setting, recording my interaction with seminal literature, and then noting my present conclusions on the issue.

In this chapter, I will quote from and discuss both the book of Acts as well as the epistles. Just because something happened historically and is recorded in Acts does not necessarily make it normative for the church for all time. However, Acts does form the historical backdrop for what is taught to the churches in the epistles and Luke certainly had a purpose for what he included in his account. He highlights the progress of the

gospel starting from Jerusalem and then spreading to Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth. He places the Pauline missionary teams at the center of this progress amongst the Gentiles. We observe them consistently gathering the believers into churches wherever they went. But I do concur with Fee and Stuart regarding historical precedent in Acts:

The decision as to whether certain practices or patterns are repeatable should be guided by the following considerations. First, the strongest possible case can be made when only one pattern is found (although one must be careful not to make too much of silence), and then that pattern is repeated within the New Testament itself. Second, when there is an ambiguity of patterns or when a pattern occurs but once, it is repeatable for later Christians only if it appears to have divine approbation or is in harmony with what is taught elsewhere in Scripture.¹⁵

So while a statement in Acts opens the door to historical precedent, it does not close the case. That is left to the rest of the New Testament.

Issue 1: The Role of the Pastor

Questions on the Role of the Pastor

Does the New Testament speak of anything that approximates the role of the modern day “pastor”? If so, would Timothy and Titus (the recipients of the so-called “pastoral epistles”) represent such a role? What do we learn from them about the core work of a pastor? Should the pastor be an elder or remain distinct from the elder team? Should he envision himself as a temporary “setting in order the things that remain” (Titus 1:5) type leader who then moves on or as a permanent, residential teacher/trainer?

¹⁵ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 111-112.

Foundational Scriptures on the Role of the Pastor

The first foundational Scripture is Acts 20:17,28 which states, “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.... Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Paul states that the Holy Spirit had made the *elders* of the Ephesian church *overseers* and that as such they were to *shepherd* or *pastor* the church of God. While Paul never gives the elders the title “pastors”, he uses the infinitive form of the verb “to shepherd” to describe their work. So historically, we observe elders who were to shepherd or pastor the church in Ephesus.

The second foundational Scripture is 1 Peter 5:1-3:

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness, nor yet lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Just as Paul did in Acts 20, Peter exhorts the elders (1 Pet 1:1) to *shepherd* the flock of God among them. Once again, no title other than “elder” is given. Elders are commanded to pastor or shepherd God’s flock.

Also of interest, Peter calls himself a “fellow elder” (1 Pet 5:1). The apostle John would refer to himself in similar fashion (“the elder”) in his second epistle to “the elect lady and her children” (2 John 1). If the apostles of Christ envisioned a perpetuating office higher than elders, would they not have introduced such an office or at least referred to themselves in that way? But they did neither.

The third foundational Scripture is 1 Timothy 5:17,18 which states, “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work

hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,’ and ‘the laborer is worthy of his wages’.” Two observations from this passage are germane to the current discussion. First, some elders will work harder at preaching and teaching than other elders. Secondly, those who do so are worthy of wages. The passage is silent as to whether these elders should always come from within that local church community, if they should be paid a “full-time” wage, and whether such positions should be viewed as temporary or permanent in nature.

The fourth foundational Scripture is Ephesians 4:11-13a which states, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith...” Here Paul uses the participle of the verb “to pastor” as a noun to refer to an equipping gift of “pastors”. How does this gift relate to the office of elder? This may signal that while all elders are to do the work of pastors, some of them will be specially gifted for that work. On the other hand, these gifted men may use their gifts independently of the office of elder as was probably the case with the other three gifts of apostles, prophets, and evangelists. The New Testament seems to leave a degree of freedom over these issues. This would explain the variety of arrangements of leadership in modern churches who seek to practice a biblical model.

The Issue in This Setting on the Role of the Pastor

When a group of people in the Strawberry Point area decided to start a church, they contacted several churches and denominations to determine compatibility. They

settled on Cedar Valley Bible Church (CVBC) of Cedar Rapids. Leaders from CVBC met with the group to help them organize CBC and then began sending assistant pastors to teach on weekends. Eventually, one man came and served as the new church's first pastor/teacher for a year.

I am the third man to serve as pastor/teacher at CBC. While the church leadership had no specific plans for the pastor/teacher to become an elder, I thought the Scriptures supported this position based on several passages. First, elders are to shepherd (pastor) the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1,2). Second, the position to which I was installed was called "pastor"/teacher. Third, some elders who work hard at preaching and teaching were considered worthy to receive wages (1 Tim 5:17,18). Last, I assumed that Timothy and Titus as the primary teachers of the churches at Ephesus and Crete were in fact elders, even though they were never referred to as such. The elders at that time agreed that while it was not required for the pastor/teacher to be an elder, the Scriptures certainly allowed for it.

Years later a controversy surfaced in the church: some strongly objected to the pastor/teacher serving as an elder. An argument from analogy surfaced. The pastor who receives a salary serving on the ruling board of the church was like a school teacher serving on the school board. It was an obvious conflict of interest from their point of view. The elders maintained that the Bible allowed the pastor/teacher to be an elder but did not demand it.

A recent reevaluation of Scripture and theological literature suggests that there is freedom as to whether the pastor of a church should be considered an elder. If Timothy and Titus were part of a gifted Pauline team of men who evangelized and then planted

and established churches, the pastor/teacher could be viewed as a teacher and resident consultant who need not be considered an elder to comply with biblical teaching.

Interaction with Seminal Literature on the Role of the Pastor

In the last twenty to thirty years, many evangelical churches changed their theological understanding of church leadership from a single pastor model to a plurality of elders model. While this change was certainly biblical, it has left in its wake less clarity about the role of a career pastor. If CBC is anything close to typical, this church understood that it was unbiblical to place one man alone in leadership. In other words, the church gained clarity about what the pastor should not be, but was not as clear about what the pastor should be. In mathematical terms, the pastor could either be considered equal to, greater than, or less than an elder. If given a title equivalent to one of these, the pastor might be called (or viewed) as an elder, a bishop, or an employee. These three options are discussed in the subsections below.

The Pastor as an Elder (Equal Authority with the Elders)

In his *Systematic Theology*, Wayne Grudem approximates the practice of CBC. After describing the Episcopalian and Presbyterian systems of church government, he discusses Congregationalism. Under Congregationalism, he discusses plural local elders. In his diagram, he pictures the pastor as one of the elders¹⁶. He notes that the pastor "... has a somewhat distinct role in that he is engaged in the full-time work of 'preaching and teaching' (1 Tim 5:17), and derives part or all of his income from that work (1 Tim 5:18).

¹⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 932.

He also may frequently assume a leadership role (such as chairman) among the elders, which would fit with his leadership role among the congregation, but such a leadership role among the elders would not be necessary to the system.”¹⁷

Since the teaching of plurality of elders has gained popularity, there has been a debate regarding the need for a single recognized leader. Gene Getz is a proponent of the “one recognized leader” position. Getz has fleshed out his thinking in his recent book, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church*. He states, “...the New Testament definitely teaches and illustrates that when there is a plurality of leadership, someone needs to function as the primary leader of the team.”¹⁸

To prove his point, Getz focuses first on Peter as the leader of the apostles. He demonstrates that this was no accident. Jesus intentionally prepared Peter for this role.¹⁹ Peter led in the upper room to replace Judas. Peter led on the day of Pentecost as he explained the significance of the event. Getz also observes James with the Jerusalem elders as well as Timothy and Titus and concludes: “It’s God’s design – from the time He chose men like Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Nehemiah in the Old Testament, and Peter, Paul, Timothy, and Titus in the New Testament – to always have a key leader in place to lead His people. Why would we think differently when it involves elders/overseers in a local church?”²⁰

¹⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 933.

¹⁸ Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers), 217.

¹⁹ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 218.

²⁰ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 220-223.

Getz transparently notes that early in his ministry, he was so committed to plurality in leadership that he would deny that he was the primary leader. He admits that he was actually denying reality. He now views his ministry or role as functioning at three levels:

First, I look to my fellow elders as my spiritual counselors and advisors. Ultimately, I am accountable to them.... Second, I view my role as an elder/pastor as 'one among equals' in the decision-making process. Though I bring recommendations and proposals to the elders, final decisions are made by the total body of elders.... Third, I view my role as serving as a pastor and leader to the elders. Each of them has a right to look to me as their spiritual shepherd and leader. In this sense, I am a 'pastor to the pastors' ...²¹

The position Getz argues seems quite similar to Alexander Strauch's concept of "first among a council of equals".²² While there is certainly no New Testament command that each council of elders must have one designated leader, the biblical precedents and apparent wisdom of such an arrangement would certainly allow for it. But correct theology must be accompanied by Christ-like living and thinking. All biblical cautions against loving places of prominence (3 John 9) and biblical admonitions to seek to be the servant of all (Luke 22:24-27) must be kept in mind.

The Pastor as a Bishop (Greater Authority than the Elders)

Some would view a pastor as unique from the elders. Arthur Patzia, for instance, differentiates between elders and bishops. He seems to agree with Kevin Giles who concludes that "the bishop is an elder chosen to oversee or manage a house-church".²³

²¹ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 255,256.

²² Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev.ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995), 45.

²³ Arthur G. Patzia, *The Emergence of the Church: Context, Growth, Leadership and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 173.

Timothy had been ordained to the ministry with the laying on of hands by the council of elders (1 Tim 4:14). If this perspective is correct, it would equate the “senior” pastor as one who functions in approximately the same role as Timothy did in Ephesus.

While this view has some similarities with the view mentioned above by Gene Getz, there appears to be a fundamental difference. Getz views himself as “one among equals”. The pastor as bishop view places the pastor/bishop as one with greater authority than the elders. Once again, those involved in such a system could make this work. The “bishop” would have to adopt the attitude of a servant, not a lord. The elders would have to maintain a close relationship with the bishop and there would have to be a great deal of mutual respect. If those involved have the mind of Christ (Phil 2:1ff) in which they all refuse to focus only on their own interests but instead focus also on the interests of others, this theology of leadership could work in practice just as well as the previous position (*Pastor as an Elder*).

Pastor as Employee (Lesser Authority than the Elders)

Gene Getz has observed that some churches view team leadership in such a way that the pastor actually has no authority:

I’m aware of some situations where the elders are led by a nonstaff leader who takes charge of not only the board, but the church. The primary pastor either is not classified as an elder or simply reports to the elders. This not only violates biblical principles but puts the primary servant-leader in a very difficult position. Though he devotes full-time to the church, he really cannot lead with the full support from the elders.²⁴

This position would certainly guard against the danger of a pastor having too much authority. It might also free a pastor to minister the word and pray with fewer distractions

²⁴ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 257.

of administrative work. But this perspective could have a detrimental effect on the church and the leadership team. It could diminish the effectiveness of one on the team with an important equipping gift.

Present Conclusion on the Role of the Pastor

There seems to be both an art and a science to church leadership. The “science” of leadership is the theology while the “art” is the relational practice of leadership. Our drive to understand and describe the titles and responsibilities of church leaders may at times border on the “straining at gnats while swallowing camels” about which Jesus warned us. While it is clear that the New Testament teaches and models plurality of leaders at the local church level, it lacks precision in defining the title and specific role of the pastor.

In the project guides and models section of his course notebook *Leaders and the Early Church*, Jeff Reed notes that he prefers the term “minister of the gospel”, but also accepts the term “pastor”. Reed observes,

There are many possible forms that this pastoral leadership/elder structure could take within and amongst local churches. Some may want these ministers of the gospel to be elders also, some may just want the lead pastor to be an elder, and some may want them to work with the elders, but be distinct. The Scripture is not clear on this matter, but the existence of and ongoing functions of these leaders are clear.²⁵

No one questions that Timothy was a leader in the church at Ephesus. But attaching a title to Timothy and describing the exact nature of his relationship with the elders of the church is much more difficult. Timothy is never called a pastor or an elder in

²⁵ Jeff Reed, *Leaders and the Early Church: Advanced Edition* (Ames: BILD International, 2003), 45.

either of Paul's letters to him. But as Reed notes, "Timothy assumed the lead role in the church at Ephesus – both in preaching and teaching, shaping the eldership, and in ordering the household around Paul's teaching (1 Tim 3:14-16; 4:1-16; 5:17ff). The basis of his function was his gift as a minister of the gospel and his faithful stewardship of the deposit – the teaching."²⁶

During my ministry at CBC, I have functioned both within the eldership as well as distinct from the eldership. In either case, the elders do look to me as a resource both for them and the church for teaching and preaching, guidance in understanding and applying the Bible to specific circumstances, and in helping to guide the elders and the church into a more biblical pattern. At the same time, the elders can and do give me directives so I remain accountable to their guidance as well. To some degree, whether I am an elder or not does not seem to change the essential nature of my role in the church as a leader.

Issue 2: The Plurality of Elders

Questions on the Plurality of Elders

How did the early church practice plurality of elders? Did God intend one elder per house church with plurality produced by a plurality of house churches in a community or did each local church (house church or otherwise) have a plurality? How should a SRI church practice plurality of elders?

²⁶ Reed, *Leaders*, 45.

Foundational Scriptures on the Plurality of Elders

Acts 14:23 states, “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” As an essential part of their missionary methods, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (plural) in every church (singular) in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. With prayer and fasting, they committed these churches to the Lord and then moved on to other opportunities to proclaim the gospel and establish churches.

The rest of the New Testament seems to verify this pattern (plurality of elders in every church). We see it in Acts 20:17 where Paul “...sent to Ephesus and called to him the *elders of the church* (emphasis mine).” We see it in Paul’s epistle to the Philippians where he writes to “...all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the *overseers*” (Phil 1:1). We see it again in Paul’s letter to Titus who was “...to appoint *elders in every city*” (Titus 1:5). Even James will encourage the sick to “call for the *elders of the church*” (Jas 5:14).

The Issue in this Setting on the Plurality of Elders

CBC of Strawberry Point, Iowa was started in 1978 by a group of believers with a primarily Baptist theology and polity. They requested help from Cedar Valley Bible Church of Cedar Rapids in organizing themselves as a New Testament Church. This new church adopted a “plurality of elders” position but none of the founders had observed or worked within such a system of church government.

While receiving my seminary education at Dallas Theological Seminary, I became convinced of the plurality of elders position. My wife and I committed ourselves

to the ministry of Garland Bible Fellowship, a Fellowship Bible church-plant in the Dallas area, which practiced plurality of eldership. When we moved to Iowa, what I shared with the elders of CBC was a common belief coupled with very little experience actually living out the realities of life in an “elder rule” church.

Interaction with Seminal Literature on the Plurality of Elders

One of the most comprehensive treatments on elders available from an evangelical point of view is *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch.²⁷ He blends a systematic (Parts 1&2) as well as a biblical theological (Part 3) approach to this issue. Strauch argues that biblical eldership must be a pastoral, shared, male, qualified, and servant leadership (Part 1).

Strauch addresses the issue of plurality in each local congregation. There is no debate as to whether each community had a plurality of elders. The passages listed above demonstrate that beyond question. Strauch argues that from the beginning, each church was led by a council of elders: “At the end of Paul’s first missionary journey, he appointed a council of elders for each newly founded church: ‘And when they had appointed elders [plural] for them in every church [singular], having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed’ ” (Acts 14:23). Note that here, as in James 5:15, the term *elder* is plural and the word *church* is singular. Thus each church had elders.”²⁸

²⁷ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*.

²⁸ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 36,37.

Traditionally, Baptists have favored a “one pastor with a plurality of deacons” position. So one would expect that Baptist theology would determine what a Baptist theologian would see when looking at these passages. But Baptist author, Derek Tidball in his book *Skillful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* writes,

The sixth dimension concerns the sharing of ministry. Paul’s evangelistic mission was never content with the conversion of individuals. It aimed at the founding of churches and Paul was careful to ensure that these had local leadership before he left (Acts 14:23). He strengthened them in any way he could (Acts 18:23), but leadership was really delegated into their hands.... It seems everywhere to have been a plurality of leadership, never a one-man-ministry, which was exercised in the early church.²⁹

Richard Swartley takes the argument one step further. He argues that either way, elders did not rule unilaterally.

Some try to escape the implications of Acts 14:23 by saying that each house church had an elder, and that these elders functioned collectively at the city level. This sometimes may have been the case. A church in a small community may have operated only as a collection of house fellowships, and, therefore, that church had plural elders only in that sense. But the principle remains the same: Elders always acted collectively; their decisions were not made unilaterally, but were made with their brother elders.... The verse is explicit – ‘elders in every church.’ Therefore, whatever it is that constitutes a church, it is to be led by a plurality of elders.³⁰

Swartley, like other authors, is careful to point out that it is not mere numbers serving on a decision-making board that the apostles had in mind. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, leaders are responsible to labor among the congregation, have charge over the congregation, and give instruction to the members of the body.³¹ Leaders (elders) are also to keep watch over the souls of the congregation (Heb 13:17). In other

²⁹ Derek J. Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 76.

³⁰ Richard H. Swartley, *Eldership in Action: Through Biblical Governance of the Church* (Dubuque, IA: Emmaus College Press, 2005), 19.

³¹ Swartley, *Eldership in Action*, 20.

words, these men are not merely a board of directors. They are to be shepherds – caring tenderly for those of the flock who are hurting and in need.

Gene Getz summarizes what he has come to view as the biblical ideal. “As the biblical story unfolds in the New Testament, it becomes increasingly clear that each local church was to be managed and shepherded by a unified team of godly men.”³² Getz lists seventeen Scripture passages that show plurality to be the norm of New Testament church leadership.³³ He suggests that structures changed according to the need and size of the house church. The principle of plurality would have to be practiced in the context of the principle of appointing only qualified leaders.

Present Conclusion on the Plurality of Elders

I believe that the evidence of Scripture favors the view that each local (house or otherwise) church should be lead by a plurality of elders. While this teaching is not openly under attack, it needs to be better established throughout the church. Experience teaches that many in the American church revert to the default theological practice that a singular pastor really does the ministry. Other appointed leaders (regardless of title) assist the pastor instead of working together to shepherd the body as a team.

Issue 3: Role of Elders

Questions on the Role of Elders

What is the core work of elders? Are they primarily a decision-making board or are they pastors who care for the flock as spiritual teachers and examples? Are they both?

³² Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 209.

³³ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 209, 210.

Foundational Scriptures on the Role of Elders

The first foundational Scripture is Acts 20:17,18,28:

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them... "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood".

Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders was to guard themselves and the flock.

There is doctrinal and moral danger lurking about the church and it is the work of elders to protect the church. Paul's words highlight the need for elders to know as well as practice the Scriptures. They are to then take the Scriptures and apply them among the people of the church as overseers. Therefore, not only must the elders know the Lord's word, they must know the Lord's people.

The second foundational Scripture is 1 Timothy 5:17 which states, "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." Whatever else you conclude from this passage, we clearly observe that in the mind of the apostle Paul, preaching and teaching were an essential part of ruling well. Elder "rule" is not mere administration. It is communicating the word of God to the people of God.

The third foundational Scripture is 1 Timothy 3:2 which states, "An overseer, then, must be... able to teach." While the qualifications for elders and deacons are similar in many respects, this one (able to teach) stands as unique for elders. Unlike deacons whose primary function is to serve, the elder's primary role is to teach.

The fourth foundational Scripture is Titus 1:7-9 which states, "For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward ... holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and

to refute those who contradict.” Once again we observe from Paul’s letter that elders/overseers were to be able to teach. Certainly there is no requirement that the elder must be able to teach in a large group setting. The qualification takes aim at the elder’s grasp of the word so as to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those in error.

The fifth foundational Scripture is Hebrews 13:17 which states, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” Leaders were much more than administrators in the church. They were expected to watch over souls. The consistent teaching of the New Testament is that this included instruction in the truth and guarding the flock from error with the authority to administer discipline.

The Issue in this Setting on the Role of Elders

Discerning the core work of elders in a rural setting probably differs little from doing so in an urban setting. I have read of the problem in city churches where you can have too many elders. That has yet to be a problem here. Two primary problems have emerged. First, elders must have a firm enough grasp of Scripture so that they can lead and govern the body. While the elders will never be right about every detail, they must at least rightly grasp the main Scriptural doctrines and biblical direction of the church. Second, there is always a danger of the elders turning into a mere governing board rather than a team of servants who minister to the spiritual needs of individuals in the body of Christ. This balance of leadership with caring for needs is quite elusive.

The elders of CBC have historically shared in teaching adult Sunday School classes as well as leading small groups. They have participated in helping decide what book of the Bible the pastor-teacher will be teaching in the meetings of the church and have offered encouragement and constructive comments on the teaching as it progresses.

Interaction with Seminal Literature on the Role of Elders

Those who look to the inerrant Scriptures to discover the work of the elders of a church enumerate these tasks differently, but are in essential agreement. They merely differ in outline not essence.

Ed Glasscock lists three primary responsibilities. 1. *Ruling* (Acts 15:1-6; 1 Tim 5:17; Heb 13:17) would include judging matters of faith and practice including “matters of doctrine, personal conflicts, and moral and ethical dilemmas, as well as direct the overall plans and programs of the church”. 2. *Caring* (Acts 20:28; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1-3) refers to protecting the spiritual lives of the members, praying for them in sickness, and being compassionately involved with them in all their trials. 3. *Instructing* (1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:9-11) would include both teaching and counseling believers in the truth.³⁴

Alexander Strauch lists four broad categories. 1. “Protecting the Flock”³⁵ includes guarding the church from false teachers and teachings (Acts 20:17, 28-31a; Titus 1:5, 6, 9). 2. “Feeding the Flock”³⁶ focuses on teaching which is the on-going aspect of making disciples Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19,20. 3. “Leading the Flock”³⁷ indicates that

³⁴ Ed Glasscock, "The Biblical Concept of Elder," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 144, no. 573 (1987), 76,77.

³⁵ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 17-22.

³⁶ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 22-25.

³⁷ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 25-29.

the team of elders "...must clarify direction and beliefs for the flock. It must set goals, make decisions, correct failures, affect change, and motivate people. It must evaluate, plan, and govern. Elders must, then be problem solvers, managers of people, planners and thinkers." 4. "Caring for Practical Needs"³⁸ indicates that "...elders must be available to meet whatever needs the sheep have. This means visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved; strengthening the weak; praying for all the sheep, even those who are difficult; visiting new members; providing counsel for couples who are engaged, married, or divorcing; and managing the many day-to-day details of the inner life of the congregation."³⁹

Gene Getz lists six: teaching biblical truth, modeling Christ-like behavior, maintaining doctrinal purity, disciplining unruly believers, overseeing financial matters, praying for those who are ill.⁴⁰ Jeff Reed lists seven.

...shepherding the lives of the people (Acts 20:28); speaking, exhorting, and refuting in sound doctrine (Titus 1:9); community oversight in matters of discipline (1 Thess 5:12-14); confirming and commending trained ministers of the gospel (Acts 13:1-4; 1 Tim 4:14); oversight of finances of the church community (1 Tim 3:4,5; 1 Tim Acts 6:1-7); decisions of corporate property matters (Acts 4:32-37; 6:1-7; 1 Tim 3:4,5); and general oversight of the ministry of the church (1 Tim 3:4,5).⁴¹

Glenn Daman, writing from the perspective of a small, rural church states,

Often we view the board from an organizational perspective. However, when we examine Scripture, we discover that the primary role of the board is not organizational but spiritual. Although we are responsible to oversee the structures,

³⁸ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 29-31.

³⁹ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 16-34.

⁴⁰ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 191-200.

⁴¹ Reed, *Leaders and the Early Church*, 49.

programs, finances, and facilities, our ultimate responsibility is to oversee the spiritual health of the congregation.⁴²

It is clear from all these biblical observers that elders are not merely administrators. They are to be godly men who have a firm grasp of the Scriptures who are able to teach and apply them in present-day situations.

Present Conclusion on the Role of Elders

In answer to the issue and questions stated above, it is apparent that we are to view elders as both rulers and pastors. Strauch seems to summarize it best:

People today think of church elders as lay, church-board members who are separate and distinct from the professional, ordained pastor. I refer to these elders as ‘board elders;’ they are not true New Testament, Christian elders. They are advisers, committee men, executives, and directors. A true biblical eldership is not a businesslike committee. It’s a biblically qualified council of men that jointly pastors the local church. So to communicate the New Testament idea of eldership, we need to reeducate ourselves as to the New Testament usage of the term *elder*, and in some cases choose a different term.⁴³

The SRI church must look for every biblical means to train elders to function as elders.

Issue 4: Role of Deacons

Questions on the Role of Deacons

What is the core work of deacons? Are they primarily to devote themselves to the physical needs of the church as did the seven men chosen in Acts 6 or are they to serve in a broader sense by helping wherever needed by the elders?

⁴² Glenn Daman, *Developing Leaders for the Small Church: A Guide to Spiritual Transformation for the Church Board* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 276.

⁴³ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 31,32.

Foundational Scriptures on the Role of Deacons

The first foundational Scripture is Acts 6:2-5a which states,

So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.' The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose ...

Many view this passage as the beginning of deaconate. While this cannot be proved conclusively, it certainly fits with what we read later of the deacons or servants of the church. We have spiritual qualifications, appointment, and service to the body of Christ freeing the leaders to pray and teach. While the specific need in Jerusalem at the time was caring for the physical needs of widows, this might be illustrative of broader venues of service to the body and the elders so that they might be free to focus on prayer and the word.

The second foundational Scripture is Philippians 1:1 which states, "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons...." Deacons were a recognized part of the leadership team of the first century church. This much is clear as Paul addresses them at the beginning of his letter to the church at Philippi.

The third foundational Scripture is 1 Timothy 3:10,13 which states, "These men (deacons) must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.... For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus." Holding to the qualifications faithfully was important. The men must first be tested. Then they may serve. There is no mention here of moving on to being an elder. It seems as though the

elders' work focused on teaching while the deacons' work emphasized serving. Deacons are not presented as elders-in-training.

The Issue in this Setting on the Role of Deacons

The first deacon appointed at CBC served the church and the elders by managing the finances and keeping the minutes at elders meetings. After this man resigned, a number of years passed before the elders took a group of men through Alexander Strauch's book on deacons.⁴⁴ With input from the church body, the elders appointed four deacons who were to emphasize a ministry of mercy to those in need, especially in the church body.

Without having frequent needs in the body and failure on the part of the elders to meet regularly with the deacons, the men lacked direction. Recently, the team of deacons was expanded and given new direction. Now the deacons are responsible to help the elders in a much broader way, expanding the responsibility of the deacons to serve in any way in which they can free the elders to devote themselves to teaching, leading, and praying. Deacons have been assigned areas of responsibility according to their gifts, abilities, and desires. They have in turn found others in the body to help them with their assigned responsibilities. The deacons and elders are scheduled to meet together once a month to communicate, pray, and discuss issues of mutual concern. There is now a degree of tension between the two philosophies regarding the ministry of deacons. Are deacons exclusively ministers of mercy or servants of the church to free the elders to devote themselves to shepherding?

⁴⁴Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon: Minister of Mercy* (Littleton: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1992).

Interaction with Seminal Literature on the Role of Deacons

The body of biblical material regarding deacons is sparse. The term deacon is actually a transliteration of a Greek term (servant). Paul states that the deacons are to serve in 1 Timothy 3:10, 13. How and to what end they are to serve is not stated.

One of the difficulties when determining the role of deacons is whether or not to include Acts 6:1-6 in the discussion. The noun “deacon” is not in the passage but the related verb “to serve” is. The apostles seem to be functioning as the leaders of the church in Jerusalem since their focus was to pray and teach the word of God. Therefore, they appointed seven spiritual men “to serve” tables for the widows of the church so that the apostles would not neglect prayer and the ministry of the word (v.4). Strauch suggests that these men formed a prototype of the later office of deacon.⁴⁵

If we accept the men of Acts 6 as prototype deacons, there is still much room for discussion about the parameters of their service. Is the focus of their service to free the apostles/elders to pray and minister the word or is it to direct the distribution of church funds to those in need? The latter (favored by Strauch) focuses deacons on being “ministers of mercy” to those in need. The former broadens the ministry of deacons to being assistants to the elders to help wherever needed. In other words, should the focus of the work of deacons be directed by what those men did for the widows (served tables) or what they did for the apostles (freed them to pray and teach)?

Strauch argues from Scripture and history for the more restricted position regarding deacons:

Whatever position one takes regarding the relationship between Acts 6 and the deacons mentioned in the epistles, the concept of deacons, as derived from Paul’s

⁴⁵ Strauch, *New Testament Deacon*, 52.

two letters, is not altered. The office-title of deacon (*diakonos*) conveys the idea of practical care and service to others. Also, the fact that Scripture demands that deacons be morally qualified and examined before they serve (1 Tim 3:8-13) tells us that their service would entail delicate matters of trust such as collecting and distributing the congregation's money and caring for people who have special needs.... The overseers govern and teach; the deacons help to meet the many practical needs of needy people.⁴⁶

Gene Getz states the broader view. "...it appears there is only one primary leadership role in the church; namely, elders/overseers who are responsible to manage and shepherd God's people, just as fathers are primarily responsible to lead their families. Deacons, on the other hand, are qualified men and women who are to assist the elders/overseers in their pastoral ministries."⁴⁷

Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. adds a word picture (a bus) that helps explain this point of view (from a multi-staff, Baptist perspective):

The elders decide where the church goes, because they are the men whom the congregation has recognized as having the spiritual maturity to make those kinds of decisions. The staff drives the bus in order to get us all there, because they are the ones who are released from secular employment to minister full-time and equip the saints for the work of ministry. Deacons make sure we have enough gas to get to where we're going. They release the elders to devote themselves to spiritual leadership by serving in physical and financial matters in a way that brings unity among the church under the authority of the elders.⁴⁸

Dever offers a rather specific "fleshing out" of his view of the work of deacons:

In our church, we create deacon positions according to the practical needs of the body. So we currently have a deacon for each of the following areas: budget, bookstall and library, sound, child care, children's ministry, ordinances, member care, hospitality, ushers, weddings, community outreach, and audio duplication.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Strauch, *New Testament Deacon*, 53-54.

⁴⁷ Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 105.

⁴⁸ Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 169.

⁴⁹ Dever and Alexander, *The Deliberate Church*, 169.

In reading Strauch more carefully, he allows for deacons to help in these other areas as long as these responsibilities do not detract from the main one:

...the New Testament diaconate was never intended to be a building-maintenance committee. If your congregation owns a building, form a building-maintenance committee. The people on that committee do not need to meet God's qualifications for deaconship, nor do they need to be publicly examined and approved. If you need a deacon on the committee to facilitate good church management and communication, that is acceptable, but do not allow the diaconate to lose its primary focus... We must not forget that the real treasures of the church are its people, not its pews and buildings.⁵⁰

In this view, serving people takes priority over managing things.

Timothy Keller seems to offer a sensible "both and" solution to this debate. Keller lists the following as the work of the diaconate: mercy, stewardship, property, and helps.

Mercy. To meet physical/economic needs inside and outside of the congregation. Visiting the sick, the poor, the elderly, single parent families and helping families in emergencies are included under this heading.

Stewardship. To encourage and promote liberal giving by the congregation, and then to collect and distribute those financial gifts. Stewardship education, envelope systems, counting, recording, depositing and reporting funds are included under this heading.

Property. To keep all the properties of the congregation in good repair and maintenance, and to control their use.

Helps. To accomplish the practical tasks and errands that are entailed in the ongoing program of the church. Ushering, setting up equipment and chairs are included in this category. Although these duties are not necessarily performed by the deacons, the deacons are responsible for their discharge.⁵¹

While this gives deacons a rather expansive area of service, mercy remains at the top of the list while still offering help to the elders in other areas of need.

⁵⁰ Strauch, *New Testament Deacon*, 157.

⁵¹ Timothy J. Keller, *Resources for Deacons* (Decatur, GA: Presbyterian Church in America Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1985), 30.

Present Conclusion on the Role of Deacons

Since there is no conclusive evidence to limit the deacons to ministers of mercy, the “both/and” approach of viewing deacons as both assistants to the elders as well as ministers of mercy to those in physical need matches the biblical data and makes practical sense in application, especially in a SRI church.

Issue 5: Choosing Leaders

Question on Choosing Leaders

How are churches to choose their leaders?

Foundational Scriptures on Choosing Leaders

The first two foundational Scriptures will be discussed together. Acts 14:23 states, “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Titus 1:5 states, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you.” These two passages demonstrate that those who were recognized teachers and leaders and were instrumental in planting and establishing the churches did the actual appointing of elders. Those elders once appointed would continue to direct the churches in the absence of those first teachers and preachers. This guaranteed continuity of spiritual care for the church.

The third and fourth foundational Scriptures will also be treated together. The third passage is Acts 16:1-3a which states, “Paul came to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy ... and he was well spoken of by the brethren who

were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him....” The fourth is 1 Timothy 3:2a which states, “An overseer, then, must be above reproach....” These passages demonstrate that those who did the appointing were certainly in tune with those who knew these men the best – those they lived and worked with every day. Present leaders must value the input of the community of believers as the primary group before whom the elder must have a good reputation.

The Issue in this Setting on Choosing Leaders

The elders of CBC have developed a system in which they approach and then interview prospective elders and their wives (if married). After the interview, if the elders agree that the man should be considered for eldership, the church body is informed of the elders’ decision and then invited to write their thoughts to the elders. The elders ask that the writers identify themselves if they have concerns to communicate so that the elders might follow up on their concerns.

One weakness of our system is that there has been no consistency in pursuing men for eldership. Usually, the need for elders becomes serious when the elder team is depleted by resignations, illness, or family problems. By the time a church really needs more elders, it’s too late to start looking.

Interaction with Seminal Literature on Choosing Leaders

Once again we face a rather important issue without a lot of specific directives on how to accomplish the task. Certainly appointing elders was and is a critical matter in the life of a church. Denominational churches have specific policies and rules of order stating

the offices and how individuals go about being placed in them. But independent churches have attempted a reformation of sorts in this realm, starting “from scratch” with the New Testament as their sole authority. But without apostles such as Paul or apostolic appointees such as Timothy or Titus, who has biblical authority to make these appointments?

Due to their independence, Bible churches have no hierarchical structure outside themselves to help make appointments inside their church. So they are left with the present elders, the congregation, or some corroboration of the two bodies as the means of appointing new leaders.

In the passages quoted above, leaders appoint other leaders. The first elders were appointed by those teachers and preachers who either planted the churches or who were left behind to complete the process of establishing those churches. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul comes the closest to telling us who is in charge of the preparation and appointment of new spiritual leaders. “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). Someone must be observing who the faithful men are. Alexander Strauch suggests the elders do this:

“...if the elders do not take the initiative, the process will stagnate. The elders have the authority, position, and knowledge to move the whole church to action. They know its needs, and they know its people. So they can, intentionally or not, stifle or encourage the development of new elders. The reason some churches can’t find new elders is that no one is really looking for them.”⁵²

The alternative of turning elder selection into a congregational vote seems unwise and unbiblical. In his helpful and practical book, *Eldership in Action*, Richard Swartley

⁵² Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 278.

notes numerous bullet points why the Scriptures do not support the election of elders by the congregation. It turns the elders into elected representatives of the church. The individual congregant cannot be expected to possess adequate knowledge about the man in question or to pass authoritative judgment on the readiness of the man to serve. No one is held accountable for their vote since they only voice a "yes or no" opinion. It can also put a very small minority in charge of decisions that should rest with the church leadership.⁵³

Who is better qualified than the current elders to oversee the training of new potential leaders? Who is better qualified than the current elders to appoint those who demonstrate through their training that they are qualified and equipped to serve? Strauch notes a helpful, practical comment by Bruce Stabbert. "How did Jesus prepare Peter and the other apostles for church leadership? He disciplined them. He spent time with them. He prayed with them and for them. And that is the way that true elders will be developed in a local church. Somebody is going to have to disciple some men... Someone must spend time with them. Someone must teach them. Someone must pray with them and for them."⁵⁴

But what are we to do with Acts 6:1-6? In the narrative of Acts, the apostles set forth a selection process for the men who would serve tables, caring for the needy widows of the church. Those servants were to free the apostolic leaders to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. The congregation of the Jerusalem

⁵³ Swartley, *Eldership in Action*, 50-52.

⁵⁴ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 279.

church chose seven men and presented them to the apostles who ordained them through prayer and the laying on of hands.

To use Acts 6:1-6 to establish the election of elders seems wrong on two fronts. First, these men were not being appointed as elders. The spiritual directors and teachers of the church of Jerusalem were not chosen by congregational vote. They were appointed by Christ. Second, nowhere in Acts or the epistles do we find the congregation choosing her spiritual leaders.

Present Conclusion on Choosing Leaders

Alexander Strauch's list of the appointment process serves as an accurate summary of the New Testament teaching regarding appointing elders: "...desire, qualification, selection, examination, installation, and prayer."⁵⁵ As he expounds each of these, he also explains that the congregation must not be passive in the process. Everyone in the church must have a knowledge of the qualifications and the elders must provide a way for the people of the body to have a voice in examining and approving their prospective elders and deacons.⁵⁶ If there are objections or accusations, the elders must investigate to see if they are scripturally based.

In this area, the main need of CBC is a systematic, prayerful assessment of current and potential elders. In years past, we annually evaluated one another as elders. This must be reinstituted by using the assessment form and process presented in chapter four. As we do our assessments, it should remind us to look for faithful men to prepare to join us.

⁵⁵ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 279.

⁵⁶ Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 283.

Issue 6: Training Leaders

Questions on Training Leaders

To what degree in a church-based leadership training paradigm is each local church responsible to train leaders of all levels (mature adults, deacons, elders, evangelists, pastors, and missionaries)?

Foundational Scriptures on Training Leaders

Three foundational Scriptures will be quoted and then discussed together. The first is Acts 16:1-3a which states, “Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy...and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him...” The second passage is 2 Timothy 2:2 which states, “The things which you (Timothy) have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The third is Acts 13:1,2 which states, “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers.... While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

The three passages above reflect leadership development and/or recognition in three different situations: Derbe/Lystra/Iconium (Timothy’s home area), Ephesus (Timothy’s eventual church establishing charge), and Antioch (the sending church for Paul and Barnabas). In these three diverse situations, there is no apparent single pattern for leadership training, recognition, and development.

The Issue in this Setting on Training Leaders

The New Testament does not contain a full-blown training manual for training disciples and leaders in a local church setting. The entire New Testament itself is as close as we have to such a manual with some books such as the Pastoral Epistles more specifically addressing leadership in the local church. As mentioned earlier, the three different local churches referred to in the Acts passages above do not itemize a universal pattern for leadership training, recognition, and appointment. In the Lystra area, it appears that Timothy was yet in the early stages of discipleship when Paul expressed his desire to take him along. Thus, much of his training would have been as Paul's traveling apprentice/disciple away from his home church. Timothy, a minister trained by Paul but sent to Ephesus, is commanded to identify and teach faithful men who then will teach others. In Antioch, the teachers and prophets were apparently "imports", evangelized, disciplined, and trained elsewhere (Barnabas from Jerusalem, Saul from Tarsus, Lucius from Cyrene) but sent or invited to the church in Antioch. To what degree then, should each church endeavor to provide multi-level leadership training?

The seemingly generous supply of teachers in the Antioch church seems idyllic. The Spirit could relocate two of their gifted preacher/teachers and the ministry continued on. But the SRI church in our day often seems more like Lystra than Antioch – as soon as one devoted young disciple emerges, he or she is whisked away to both be trained and to serve elsewhere. Timothy's commission by Paul to identify and then teach faithful men who can then teach others while a great goal in a SRI setting seems a great but unattainable ideal. Here is perhaps the greatest tension in a SRI church setting. How can a

pastoral staff of one accomplish all that such a church demands of him and also provide multi-level leadership training?

Interaction with Seminal Literature on Training Leaders

In the old paradigm of leadership training, every church operated within the same system and therefore had the same opportunities. Any young person showing signs of commitment and desire would volunteer for “full-time” Christian service and enroll in a Christian college or Bible School. This formal education might then be followed up with a seminary degree. As long as the young person and/or their family had the necessary financial resources, everyone started on the same footing, regardless of church size or location.

Through video seminar entitled “Training Leaders in the 21st Century”⁵⁷ and in *The Paradigm Papers*,⁵⁸ Jeff Reed voiced some challenging questions. Was formal, institutional education the best way to train men for local church ministry? If not, what shape should that training take? While acknowledging the legitimacy of the concept of seminary, Reed noted the short-comings of formalized seminary education: 1) cost; 2) ill-equipped graduates; 3) inability to meet the leadership needs of the rapidly expanding two-thirds world church; 4) the shift away from wisdom to academic knowledge.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ “Training Leaders in the 21st Century: A Video Seminar About New Paradigms for the Postmodern Church”, Videocassette (Ames, IA: BILD International, 2000).

⁵⁸ Jeff Reed, *The Paradigm Papers: New Paradigms for the Post-Modern Church* (Ames, IA: LearnCorp, 1997).

⁵⁹ Jeff Reed, “Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm”, in *Leaders and the Early Church*, advanced ed., reading “r” (Ames, IA: BILD International, 2003), 7.

Jonathan Chao observed and wrote about the same shortcomings. Western Christianity has unwittingly transferred both our western (Roman Catholic) style of church structure/leadership and our style of leadership training by focusing on the cleric/ordination model rather than the body life/spiritual gifts model revealed in the New Testament. He supported his contention by the church's failure to develop leadership in the third world. I suspect that the third world is not the only place where the church has failed to develop leadership. The "divorce" between the local church and leadership training institution seems to perpetuate the failure.⁶⁰

Chao supported his observation by looking at how we train people and leaders to perform certain skills. "The be-goals, know-goals, and do-goals set forth in the Bible cannot be developed outside the church ministry context. It is like swimming. One cannot become a good swimmer without getting into the water. Nor can one become a good Field Marshall without battle experience."⁶¹

But if the formal, institutional setting was not the place to train leaders for Christ's church, what was? The answer was both simple and profound: Christ's church was the place to train leaders for Christ's church. As Jeff Reed put it in his paper *Church-Based Theological Education*, "The church-based training of the early church was clearly understood as a flexible leadership development strategy rooted in the life and ministry of local churches, in which 'gifted men' (Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:2) entrusted more

⁶⁰ Jonathan Chao, "Education and Leadership", in *The Face of Evangelicalism: An International Symposium on the Lausanne Covenant*, ed. C. Rene Padilla, chapter 11 (Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity Press, 1976) in *Leaders and the Early Church*, advanced ed., reading "t" (Ames, IA: BILD International, 2003), 196.

⁶¹ Chao, "Education", 202.

and more of the ministry to other faithful men while they themselves remained deeply involved in the process of establishing churches.”⁶²

Jonathan Chao adds to Reed’s observation. “How can one learn the biblical be-goals like loyalty to Christ and faithfulness to his ministry, love for his flock and compassion for the unregenerate, willingness to forgive, humility, self-denial, sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit, etc. – without active participation in the living ministry of the church.”⁶³

With these men’s observations in mind, reading the New Testament with a view to how leaders were trained opens a whole new perspective or paradigm. Why take potential leaders out of the very setting in which they will ultimately minister for Christ and His church just to train them? The best training for ministry in the church would be church-based training. This makes the most sense both biblically and pragmatically.

But what makes a training program truly church based? Jeff Reed, in writing “Church Based Ministry Training Which Is Truly Church Based”, states that the program must be ecclesiastically driven. This means that “...the heart of our mission must be embedded in the entire process of establishing and multiplying churches.”⁶⁴ This does not mean that a church may not receive any help from outside her members. Reed would later say that “...churches and church leaders do not need someone to come in and train them in their programs or to train their people for them. They need help in developing their

⁶² Reed, “Church-Based Theological Education”, 9.

⁶³ Chao, “Education”, 202.

⁶⁴ Jeff Reed, “Church-Based Ministry Training Which Is Truly Church Based”, in *Leaders and the Early Church*, advanced ed., reading “s” (Ames, IA: BILD International, 2003), 8.

own strategies and programs, identifying the best resources available, and designing their own assessment criteria.”⁶⁵

While a SRI church cannot change its “rurality”, it can certainly revise how it views its independence. The theological debates of liberalism versus fundamentalism soured many churches on denominational entanglements. But it is also clear that while those early New Testament churches maintained a level of independence, there was certainly an inter-dependence of material goods, teachers, traditions, and applications of Scripture. Rural, independent churches must find ways to build partnerships with organizations and institutions that are ecclesiastically driven.

Jeff Reed introduces and describes four components that shaped leadership in the early church: the Antioch church, Pauline teams, elders and deacons, and church networks and partnerships.⁶⁶ In an independent church, one can all too easily adopt a very limited vision. Leadership training easily gets reduced to only the local level. The Antioch Church commended the men God the Spirit selected to go to the Gentiles. The “Pauline team” consisted of gifted men whom God used to make disciples and plant churches. They were accompanied by apprentices, associates, and co-workers. Elders and deacons provided leadership at the local level. The churches maintained relationship with one another. This broader view of ministry demands that SRI churches discover ways to network with other churches and missionary teams.

⁶⁵ Jeff Reed, “Church-Based Ministry Training”, 12.

⁶⁶ Jeff Reed, “Church-Based Leadership: Creating a New Paradigm”, in “Global Church-Based Theological Education D.Min. track for Residency 1” reading “c”, Presented at 2003 BILD Summit (Ames, IA: BILD International, 2003), 12-14.

Present Conclusion on Training Leaders

Church-based leadership training is biblical. SRI churches must learn how they can accomplish this among their own leaders and how they can partner with others to both train and send out equipped and gifted teams who can further the work of planting and establishing churches.

Issue 7: Missions and the Rural Church

Questions on Missions and the Rural Church

How do the local leaders lead a SRI church into participation in Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations?

Foundational Scriptures on Missions and the Rural Church

The first foundational Scripture is Matthew 28:18b-20 which states, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." Christ has been given authority on heaven and earth. Ephesians 1:20-23 confirms this. It was after the death and resurrection of His Son that God the Father "...seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion ... and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church." As head of the church, Christ has the authority to set its direction.

The command of this passage is to "make disciples of all nations". It is now clear that Jesus Christ intended to extend His kingdom to the entire world. The means to do so

would be His disciples. The further unfolding of this commission would await the book of Acts and the epistles. But the goal is clearly to make disciples who obey all His commands.

The methodology included baptizing and teaching. The book of Acts would record how the apostles and others proclaimed the gospel, baptized those who believed, and then taught them to obey all Christ's commands.

The promise is that Christ will be with us to the end of the age. Making disciples would occupy Christ's disciples to the end of the age. Christ's authority and presence guaranteed all the needed resources for the task.

The second foundational passage is Acts 1:8 which states, "...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Christ unveils His plan to reach the world. The Holy Spirit would come on the disciples in Jerusalem and they would become His witnesses.

The third foundational passage is Acts 13:1-14:23 which states,

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers... While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul... After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned... strengthening the souls of the disciples... when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord...

Gifted men were chosen by the Holy Spirit and sent out by the church to make disciples by proclaiming the gospel. These gifted men gathered the believers into churches who were shepherded by elders. These elders continued the teaching after the gifted men left.

The fourth foundational passage is Ephesians 4:11,12 which states, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and

teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” Paul reveals that Christ gave gifted men to the church so that the body of Christ would be built up and the saints equipped for their work. Christ is the head of the body. He desires to have each individual part of the body fully functioning so that the body might be strong. Human leaders in Christ's church are not a luxury but a necessity.

How do these five gifts work together toward an equipped body of Christ? The apostles and prophets form the foundation. Paul states that Jews and Gentiles have been joined together in Christ and both belong to God's household, "...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord..." (Eph 2:20,21). This foundation is revelation from God through these apostles and prophets.

Evangelists focus on the expansion of the church. Through them the gospel is proclaimed and the church planted. The term is used sparingly in the New Testament. Philip is called an evangelist (Acts 21:8) and Timothy is told to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5). Philip's recorded evangelistic work included preaching the word in Samaria (Acts 8:4-25), explaining the Scriptures to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38), and "...preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea" (Acts 8:39,40). Since Timothy's work extended to the further establishing of the church at Ephesus, the work of an evangelist could include not only the preaching of the gospel but also the early stages of church planting and establishing.

Pastors and teachers would then focus on the continual equipping of the saints for their work of service. Their primary focus is not the expansion of the church but

equipping the saints. The goal is that "...we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine..." (Eph 4:13,14).

The Issue in this Setting on Missions and the Rural Church

It is clear that Christ desires both breadth (expansion of the gospel) and depth (maturity in the disciples) in His church. Christ gifted the church with men to address both areas. But it seems that local church leaders (pastors and teachers) and those who expand the church (evangelists/missionaries) have become disconnected. The two groups have a history of criticizing the weakness of the other rather than fulfilling Christ's mission together.

The modern local church side of the modern missions' paradigm normally includes a missions committee, a wide variety of evangelistic and discipleship efforts, volunteer missionaries who feel "called" to missions and sometimes to a specific people or place, and perhaps an annual missions' conference. The missionary half of the paradigm includes a missions' agency, deputation, funding from individuals and churches, periodic communications in writing, and brief visits during furlough. Missionaries are basically strangers who receive some kind of an individual call from God to missions, receive training in a formal, Christian institution, and are then recruited and deployed by a missions' agency. The local churches end up as primarily scattered fund raising stations.

While the elders of CBC laid down certain philosophical foundational statements (emphasis on church planting, significant support for a few missionaries) they basically adopted the modern missions paradigm. The evangelists and the pastors and teachers are busy investing themselves on their various fronts with very little relating and interacting between them. Christ as the Head of the body never intended these gifted members of His body to be disconnected or even in conflict with one another.

Ralph Winter has observed that through history, God has always had two structures within His mission of redemption. Winter refers to these as modality and sodality.⁶⁷ Modality focuses on the community of the faithful which is the church. Sodality or the missionary team looks to expand not solidify the church. These two structures are clearly illustrated in the New Testament.

According to Winter, the Roman church understood these two structures and with her monastic tradition and orders made room for a secondary commitment to the expansion of the Roman church. The Protestants, on the other hand, did not grasp this.

Winter writes,

What interests us most is the fact that in failing to exploit the power of the sodality, the Protestants had no mechanism for missions for almost three hundred years, until William Carey's famous book, *An Enquiry*, proposed "the use of means for the conversion of the heathen.... By helping to tap the immense spiritual energies of the Reformation, Carey's book has probably contributed more to global mission than any other book in history other than the Bible itself!"⁶⁸

Winter continues, "Among Protestants, there continues to be deep confusion about the legitimacy and proper relationship of the two structures that have manifested

⁶⁷ Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 183.

⁶⁸ Winter, "Two Structures", 186.

themselves throughout the history of the Christian movement."⁶⁹ While denominational missions would have a natural tie between their missionaries and the churches, such has not been the case in the independent churches and missions. The mission organizations have developed themselves into free standing entities with their own goals and visions. Some of them have the church and churches in view while others much less so. Therefore, the leaders in an independent church are left with the task of sorting through numerous requests from missionaries and mission organizations for support as well as the relatives and friends of members of the local body in mission work of one form or another.

Interaction with Seminal Literature on Missions and the Rural Church

If the elders of a church desire to lead the church into a biblical participation in the great commission, they must first know where they are going themselves. In other words, they must develop a missions' strategy that is both biblical and workable in their setting and then both teach and lead the church into practicing it.

The church leaders must begin with the end in view. That end is planting churches. The book of Acts begins with the promise of Christ that He would send the Holy Spirit to grant power to the disciples to be witnesses for Christ to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The book of Acts then unfolds how the apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit understood and acted upon Christ's commission: they planted churches (14:22,23).

Church planting as the goal of missions is echoed repeatedly by missions' leaders. Michael Griffiths states, "What did those first apostolic missionaries like Paul, Barnabas,

⁶⁹ Winter, "Two Structures", 188.

Silas, and Timothy actually do? Certainly they did preach and teach, heal and serve – but why? For what purpose? Not just to save individual souls. Acts is absolutely clear. They planted churches.”⁷⁰ David Hesselgrave affirms, “The primary mission of the church and, therefore, of the churches is to proclaim the gospel of Christ and gather believers into local churches where they can be built up in the faith and made effective in service....”⁷¹ George Peters explains, “Wherever Paul went to preach the gospel he founded a church. Of course, it was not a church merely for a church’s sake. Paul evangelized to plant living cells that would become evangelizing centers in that community.”⁷² Roland Allen concludes, “But St Paul did not gather congregations, he planted churches, and he did not leave a church until it was fully equipped with orders of ministry, sacraments and tradition.”⁷³

In his paradigm papers series, Jeff Reed observed that to be church-based, the paradigm must include more than just church planting as its goal. He defines church-based as “a missions’ strategy which builds off the centrality of the local church, involving the training, commissioning, and serious partnership with leaders developed in its midst.”⁷⁴ So church planting must end in leadership development.

⁷⁰ Michael Griffiths, *What on Earth Are You Doing?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 39.

⁷¹ David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 17.

⁷² George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972), 219.

⁷³ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 5.

⁷⁴ Jeff Reed, “Church-Based Missions: Creating a New Paradigm” in the *Paradigm Papers: New Paradigms for the Post-Modern Church* (Ames, IA: LearnCorp, 1997), 7.

Present Conclusion on Missions and the Rural Church

Rather than having a detailed missions policy, CBC is now contemplating a principled missions' strategy. The following is a church-based missions' strategy drafted as a basis for discussion by the elders of CBC:

1. Reality begins at home. We must first be about the work of being what we hope to reproduce. Our local assembly should be substantially practicing the key principles of the church as revealed in Acts and the Epistles (Exemplary churches: Macedonia in 2 Cor 8:1-6; Thessalonica in 1 Thess 1:1,6-10).
2. The foundation for all our ministry and missions is the gospel of Christ. Christ the Son of God died a substitutionary death for sinners so that those who believe might receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 16:31).
3. Those who believe the gospel will be taught that baptism is the New Testament means of proclaiming one's faith in and commitment to Christ (Matt 28:19).
4. Baptized believers will then be taught to obey all that Christ commanded (Matt 28:20).
5. The normal context of training in the New Testament occurred in a local church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 3:5,15).
6. There is a certain level of theological understanding expected of all believers. All the saints are to attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God so as no longer to be children tossed about by various doctrines (Eph 4:13-16).
7. God has given to some in the body of Christ gifts that equip the saints for their ministries: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph 4:11,12).
8. The training of faithful men who will be able to teach others is consistently portrayed in Scripture as occurring in the context of local church ministry and establishment (2 Tim 2:2; Acts 20:17-38).
9. Those whom the Holy Spirit chose and the church leadership confirmed to send out were already ministering to the Lord and His church where they were (Acts 13:1-3). Those who were added as helpers and trainees had a good reputation among the believers of their own church (Acts 16:1-3).
10. While the Scriptures record incidents of proclaiming Christ both publicly (Acts 8:4-24) and privately (Acts 8:25-40) without the stated goal of local church planting, the norm for New Testament discipleship is portrayed as occurring in the context of church planting and establishment (Acts 13,14; 16:5; 18:22; 20:17,28; Rom 16:1-5; 1 Cor 1:2; 7:17; 11:16; 16:1,9; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:1,18,19,23,24; 11:8,28; Gal 1:2,22; Phil 4:15; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:14; 2 Thess 1:1,4; 1 Tim 3:5,15; Phlm 2; Rev 1:4; 22:16).
11. As a rural, independent church, we may need to network with other local churches when ministry opportunities are larger than what our local church can handle. This may involve common strategy and organization.

12. We will continue to establish the local church here, seeking to equip believers toward maturity and ministry and to impact the community with the gospel of Christ by lifestyle and verbal witness.
13. We will look for those specially gifted as evangelists/missionaries to train and/or send out to proclaim the gospel and establish churches elsewhere. While we hope to see this happen within our own church, we may also participate in the support of those sent out by other churches (such as the Philippian church did with Paul).
14. When opportunities come our way to support ministries that meet pressing needs (Titus 3:14) or evangelize under circumstances where planting a church is not or cannot be a stated goal (prison ministry, Bible translation, etc.), we will evaluate these opportunities prayerfully so that we are not guilty of “passing by on the other side” of a genuine need nor forsaking our primary mission of planting and establishing churches.

Issue 8: Leadership, Women, and Service in the Church

Questions on Leadership, Women, and Service in the Church

How should a church (rural or urban) faithfully interpret and apply the key texts of Scripture which speak to the roles and responsibilities that women may and may not exercise in the church?

Foundational Scriptures and Seminal Literature on Leadership, Women, and Service in the Church

The first foundational Scripture is Genesis 1:27 which states, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” After stating that God made man in His own image, Moses then states that God created man male and female. The author's intent is clearly to state that God's image extends to both male and female.

The second foundational Scripture is Genesis 2:18 which states, “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for

him.” God’s design for men and women is revealed early in Scripture. Evidently in Moses’ mind, role differentiation did not contradict his earlier statement that both the man and the woman were made equally in the image of God. While the context here in Genesis is definitely marriage, New Testament writers would reference these earlier chapters of Genesis to support role distinctions not only in the home but in the church (see Eph 5; 1 Tim 2).

Two terms describe the woman. The first is “helper” (Heb. *Ezer*). While the modern mind might recoil at the term thinking it signifies inferiority or menial servitude, the biblical term means no such thing. The word is used in Exodus 18:4 where God Himself is called the “Helper” of Moses. It occurs again in Psalm 115:9-11 where God is called the “Help” and Shield of His people. While God helps His people, He is certainly not inferior to them! The second term is “suitable” or perhaps better “corresponding to”. According to Genesis 2:20, none of the animals was a suitable helper for Adam. The term speaks of the equality of the man and the woman.

The third foundational Scripture is Genesis 3:16 which states, “To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” While there is debate on what the term “desire” means, the most convincing interpretation is “desire to control”. The same Hebrew term is used in Genesis 4:7 where God warns Cain that sin (like an animal) is crouching at the door ready to pounce on him. Sin “desired” Cain. Sin desired to possess and control Cain. So the woman’s desire, instead of being a desire to be the suitable helper she was created to be will be a desire to control her husband. To

add to the frustration in the fallen world, the man will tend to rule over (dominate) the woman. Sin has destroyed God's created design.

The fourth foundational Scripture is Colossians 3:18,19 which states, "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them." The New Testament household texts (see also Eph 5:21-32; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7) seek to restore what sin has destroyed. As the Danvers Statement notes in affirmation #6, "Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership."⁷⁵

Another series of texts address the church community regarding male and female roles (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33b-36; 1 Tim 2:9-15). The Danvers Statement affirmation #6 continues on to summarize the content of these texts regarding community life in the church: "In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men."⁷⁶

The scope of this paper is not to defend the views adopted by one church, but to articulate the issues and struggles we have faced in interpreting and applying these texts in the context of church life and leadership training.

⁷⁵ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, ed., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), 470.

⁷⁶ Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 470.

The fifth foundational Scripture is 1 Timothy 2:12 which states, “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” Our understanding of this text is that based on the order of creation and Eve’s being deceived, a godly woman is not to teach or exercise authority over men in the church. The emphasis of the text is the value God places on a woman’s ministry in her home, especially with her children.

The sixth foundational Scripture is 1 Corinthians 11:5 (see also vv. 4-16) which states, “But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.” Our understanding is that Paul does demand that a woman who participates in the public meeting of the church by praying or prophesying should at the same time honor her head (husband). The clear manifestation of this in the culture was to cover the head. This is still very much the case in many cultures where the women pull their shawls over their heads during prayer. We have left the application of this teaching as an issue of conviction or conscience. The problem is that in Paul’s culture, a woman not covering her head drew attention to herself. In twenty first century America, covering the head seems to call attention. As Dan Doriani states,

“Paul wanted men and women to give visible tokens that men lead and that women exercise their gifts within that leadership. In that culture, a head covering implied a submissive woman. Head coverings no longer signify much in contemporary Western culture. If a woman wore a shawl on her head today, people might read it as an outdated style or as odd raingear. We must find culturally appropriate ways for women to show respect to their husbands... a woman respects her husband by wearing a ring, dressing modestly, and speaking gently. In all we do, our external conduct should match our internal convictions.”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Dan Doriani, *Women and Ministry: What the Bible Teaches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 79-80.

The seventh foundational Scripture is 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 which states, "...as in all the churches of the saints. The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church." CBC interprets this passage in agreement with Dan Doriani who wrote,

...when Paul says women must remain silent, he means silent during the testing of prophecy. The testing of prophecy is the theme of 14:29-35. Paul wanted women to use their gifts, but he also wanted all teaching to be tested. That task belonged to the elders (also called overseers), especially teaching elders. We know they are male.... Close analysis of 1 Corinthians 14 supports the view that women may prophesy (11:5) but must remain silent when prophecy is tested. (14:34)⁷⁸

This view avoids Paul contradicting his earlier statements that women will pray and prophecy without having to assume Paul has shifted from a private home setting to public worship.

The eighth foundational Scripture is Galatians 3:26-29 which states, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Contrary to the opinions of some, Paul is not dismissing the role distinctions which the rest of the Bible establishes. Contextually, Paul is arguing against Judaizers who taught that believers in Christ must be circumcised to be completely perfected before God. Paul was arguing that what they proposed was not progress but regress. They were asking their listeners to leave their full status as sons of God and return to an inferior status of being under the law. In Christ, all were equally close to God. Race, rank, or sex had no bearing

⁷⁸ Doriani, *Women and Ministry*, 82.

on their relationship with God. In Christ, there was no court of women or court of the Gentiles as was the case of the temple where women and Gentiles could not approach as closely as a free, Jewish male.

Paul stands in agreement with himself and the other apostles who also pronounced equality in Christ. Peter called a man's wife a fellow-heir of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7) but also stated that she should submit to her husband. Eleven verses after Paul states that there is no slave or freeman in Colossians 3:11, he commands slaves to obey their earthly masters (3:22) and masters to treat their slaves with justice and fairness (4:1). Neither Paul nor the other apostles saw any contradiction between equality in Christ and divinely instituted role differences.

The Issues in this Setting on Leadership, Women, and Service in the Church

Interpreting these passages according to the author's intent and in a manner consistent with God's creative and redemptive design for men and women in Christ is only half the battle. Application holds just as many challenges as does interpretation. How does a local church maintain biblical male leadership without over-reacting to modern culture and forbidding women avenues of ministry not addressed in the Bible. Given the revelation that men after the fall tend toward domination, how can a church avoid abusing the Bible as did the Pharisees? Here are samples of issues of application through which CBC has struggled.

Age of Manhood

Since women are not to teach or exercise authority over a man, at what point does a boy become a man? Most evangelical churches have no process that declares this in any way parallel to the Jewish *bar mitzvah* where a boy is pronounced a man. However, because of that precedent, CBC has historically used the approximate age of twelve. Therefore, our practice has been to have male only Sunday School teachers for Junior High and Senior High classes and a male leader for youth group (with the help of his wife, if married). Some evangelical churches who would agree with our interpretation would differ in application since age eighteen is considered the legal age for entering at least some aspects of adulthood.

Public Prayer and Scripture Reading

In light of Paul's exhortation, "I want the men in every place to pray" ... (1 Tim 2:8), CBC has historically placed emphasis on male participation in these aspects of the church meeting. Willing men have read Scripture and led in prayer on a rotating basis. However, 1 Corinthians 11 makes it clear that the women of the church in Corinth prayed and prophesied. In an attempt to apply both passages, the church instituted a season of prayer during the meeting led by a man during which anyone in the church body may publicly pray. Since the appropriateness of using a head covering as a symbol of a husband's authority is questionable today here in the West, we have left head coverings as an issue of conscience for individual women and their husbands to decide. While the public reading of Scripture is still done by a man who leads this portion of our meeting, there is no Scriptural absolute denying women the right to read Scripture publicly. Men,

women, and children are free to share prayer requests and Scripture during the open-sharing time during our church meetings.

Women and Serving Communion Elements

This is an issue that the modern church created merely by the way we do things. When the supper was instituted by Christ, it was part of a meal, not merely symbolic elements passed through rows of believers all facing the front of a large room. The overlap between eating a meal and celebrating the Lord's supper is summarized by the phrase in Acts, "breaking bread".

The elders could not reach consensus on this question. Some saw this as an exercise of leading while others saw it primarily as serving. A solution was reached by actually addressing a larger issue. We changed our practice to more closely resemble the original format of remembering the Lord's death and resurrection through an actual meal together rather than merely a symbolic one. We suspended Sunday School on the first Sunday of the month and start our church meeting earlier. An extended time of sharing and prayer follows the teaching and precedes our Lord's Supper meal. The elements are already on the tables so that the leader is free to have the body partake just before, during, or after the meal.

Leading Worship in Songs, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs

CBC has maintained the practice of having a man lead our worship time with the instrumental and vocal support of a male and female praise team. We think that this

offers a consistent message of male leadership with full participation by the entire body, male and female.

Leading Small Groups and Committees

Men lead our small groups. We have assigned both elders and deacons to head up areas of concerns in the church (i.e. building, grounds, education, etc.). Each elder and deacon is free to recruit male and/or female helpers to assist him in his realm of responsibility. For example, the pastor/teacher is in charge of education. He has recruited those who teach Sunday School to children (mostly women) to act as a task force to discuss curriculum, discipline, and other decisions that affect our Sunday School. Once again this enables us to maintain male leadership and full participation by the whole church body.

Present Conclusion on Leadership, Women, and Service in the Church

Our study has redirected our focus. Because of the pressure of our world, we have tended to focus on what women should not do rather than on what they should do. While several texts discuss a woman's role in her home, Paul instructs Titus that the older women are "...to encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored" (Titus 2:3-5). Paul notes briefly that single men and women are more free to be concerned about the things of the Lord since they have no spouse to care for (1 Cor 7:34). We desire to intentionally pursue

exploring, training, and utilizing the gifts of women in ministries appropriate to their God-given design.

A Summary of Biblical Perspective (All Issues)

All the issues discussed in this chapter are pieces of a paradigm and therefore interrelated. Philosophies and practices in one area will affect another. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than between issues one (The Role of the Pastor) and six (Training Leaders). It is unlikely that the average American Christian church member thinks that training leaders should be a very high priority for their pastor. And if some of those same members become elders or participants in the decision making board of their churches, the leaders of the church will not view training leaders as part of their pastor's work either. But if the pastoral role includes teaching faithful men who will be able to teach others also, then pastors (even pastors of small, rural churches) must both lead this paradigm shift as well as be supported in it by their ruling boards. This is not merely a task for multi-staffed large city churches. It is the will of God for all churches everywhere even though it may work differently in a rural setting.

Issues two (Plurality of Elders) and three (Role of Elders) must be viewed with this task of church-based leadership training in mind. It is not enough merely to have more than one elder to satisfy one aspect of a recently rediscovered biblical ecclesiology. Those elders must function as shepherds of God's flock so that the resident pastor-teacher can devote himself to the task of training both current and future leaders for service both locally as well as possibly elsewhere in Christ's work in the world. If the work of the

elders really rests on a lone pastor, the work of training faithful men to teach others will most likely never happen.

For elders to lead and teach well, they must have deacons who serve well and wisely. Issue four addressed the role of deacons and why they are so critical to the overall work of the church. The pastor-teacher, elders, and deacons must form a functional team if all the work of ministry is to be performed. This being the case, choosing these leaders (issue five) becomes critical. These leaders must be equipped both before and after they are chosen (issue six). And as they lead, it is crucial that they understand their relationship to those who are sent out to proclaim the gospel as well as planting and establishing churches (issue seven).

The final issue (Leadership, Women, and Service in the Church) relates to all the previous issues. Since there are parallels between God's plan for the home and His plan for the church, the training and practice in both spheres must be consistent. Male leadership is commanded and exemplified in both spheres. Therefore, both for sake of unity and mission, churches must interpret and apply Scripture regarding male and female roles carefully and consistently.

We will never arrive at a time when the church is not struggling over the interpretation or application of some truth revealed by God. Churches must learn to wrestle with these issues in the context of the whole mission of the church. To return to the airplane word picture, we must not ground the whole plane due to a malfunctioning seatbelt on seat 17B. The church (especially the church's leaders) must learn to think theologically so as to discern the issues that are worth debating.

This perspective forces us back to the main point of this thesis. Every local church, including the SRI church, must equip her leaders so that they do grasp the foundational theology of the church and her leaders. They must also develop the skill to interact with the Scriptures and with the other leaders to govern and lead the church in the way of Christ and His apostles.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter one stated the need for equipping leaders in the SRI church. Chapter two laid down a foundational theology of the church and her leaders and then discussed eight challenging issues of application in this setting. We are now ready for a review of literature that relates to the issue of equipping leaders in a SRI church.

Books on training church leaders are plentiful. The number of books that address pastors of small, rural churches is even growing. Books and articles that are church-based are increasing in number as more observe the centrality of the church in Christ's plan to reach the world. But literary tools that address pastors of SRI American churches about equipping leaders from a church-based perspective are hard to find. To demonstrate this, this literature review is organized under the following headings: equipping leaders; church-based theological education (C-BTE); and SRI churches.

Equipping Leaders

Aubrey, Robert and Cohen, Paul M. *Working Wisdom: Timeless Skills and Vanguard Strategies for Learning Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995.

"*Working Wisdom* is what people do to help others learn and what learning organizations do to help people develop."¹ While a secular resource, this tool captures the importance of common goals, principles, methods, and rules for exchanging

¹Robert Aubrey and Paul M. Cohen, *Working Wisdom: Timeless Skills and Vanguard Strategies for Learning Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), xiii.

knowledge and skills within an organization. While no direct application to the church was in view, the goal of passing on wisdom to others rings true to Scripture.

Forman, Rowland and Jones, Jeff and Miller, Bruce. *The Leadership Baton: An Intentional Strategy for Developing Leaders in Your Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

The Leadership Baton is a clearly communicated simplification of the same principles at work in BILD International of Ames, IA adapted to a city (Dallas) which houses a major conservative, evangelical seminary (Dallas Theological Seminary). The team of authors popularizes rather complex ideas including the vision, process, and implementation of a church-based leadership development strategy. The book contributes a helpful summary chart and detailed explanation of each aspect:

Think through three strategic goals:
 head (knowledge and wisdom), heart (character), and hands (skills)
using three strategic components to achieve the goals:
 courses, community, and mentoring
with all three groups of strategic people:
 governing board, staff, and emerging leaders.²

While the concepts are certainly not original, the summarization is simple and memorable.

The definition of church-based training is also a great contribution to the discussion: “Developing all believers to maturity and many to leadership in the local church, under the authority of local church leadership, with other churches, through an

²Roland Forman and Jeff Jones and Bruce Miller, *The Leadership Baton: An Intentional Strategy for Developing Leaders in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 69.

apprenticeship, on-the-job approach, for Christ's mission of multiplying churches worldwide to God's glory.”³

While these principles will have broad application, the book primarily addresses a multi-staffed urban church setting. SRI churches will have no strategic group referred to as “staff” in the plural. But the reminder of the vision, process, and its implementation should find broad appeal among churches and leaders who practice these principles.

Jackson, Lewis and Caffarella, Rosemary S. *Experiential Learning: A New Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 1994

This new approach for adult learners includes both the better ways that adults can learn and more helpful ways to assess their learning. Gone are the days of mere lectures and tests. Enter instead innovative learning and portfolio assessments as tools to chronicle what has been learned.

Longenecker, Harold L. *Growing Leaders by Design: How to Use Biblical Principles for Leadership Development*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995.

The Country Shepherds' Workshop of Oak Hills fellowship is designed to train pastors wherever the traditional pastoral shepherding role is found. This book is the first of a series devoted to both affirming the value of pastorates in smaller settings and to making ministry methods culturally applicable in these settings. Our intent is not to write about things that *only* apply to rural churches but about things that definitely *will* apply there.⁴

³Forman, *The Leadership Baton*, 54.

⁴Harold L. Longenecker, *Growing Leaders By Design: How to Use Biblical Principles for Leadership Development* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995), 5-6.

So writes Joseph P. Smith in the forward of this interesting book. Unfortunately for rural pastors, this book is not only the first book in this series, it is apparently the last book in it as well, since this book was published in 1995.

The strength of the book is the positive assertion that perhaps it is the small church that is better equipped to produce leaders. The author cites an event where John MacArthur was addressing a group of pastors. He asked how many of them served congregations of one hundred. "About a hundred responded. 'All your churches together,' said MacArthur, 'equal the size of Grace church.' MacArthur then asked the pastors how many missionary and vocational personnel their churches had produced, and he pointed out that the number exceeded that of Grace Church."⁵ This idea rebukes and challenges the tendency to think of the rural church as "leadership challenged".

"This book is about the mentoring process, the pastor coming alongside the people in the church, loving them, encouraging them in personal Christian growth, helping them catch a vision of what God can do through them, and calling them to step forward into leadership positions."⁶ Longenecker makes no attempt to outline a curriculum. His plan is about spending individual time with those in the body who desire to be taught. This is a book that exhorts pastors to use mentoring as their primary leadership training tool. Though limited in scope, Longenecker does a superb job on this one issue. He is both skilled and experienced. It had a profound effect on my thinking and I have sought to make mentoring a component of my equipping plan.

⁵Longenecker, *Growing Leaders*, 140.

⁶Longenecker, *Growing Leader*, Back Cover.

This book is not a stand-alone guide to training leaders in SRI churches. It does not outline any curriculum or present a church-based methodology. There is no interaction with the pastoral strategy laid out by Paul in the pastoral epistles.

Longenecker was an educator for most of his ministry life. He then left the field of education to pastor for fourteen years in two multi-staff suburban churches ranging in size from five hundred to seven hundred. While his experience in small and rural churches is limited, he certainly has captured the importance of mentoring.

Malphurs, Aubrey and Mancini, Will. *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of your Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

The authors are both church consultants. Malphurs is the president of the consulting group that bears his name and is a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. The book utilizes an extended use of the building word picture as is seen in the titles of the four major parts: 1) Pouring the Proper Foundation; 2) Following the Blueprints; 3) Moving from Foundation to Finish; and 4) Looking at Model Homes. This is primarily a systems book (outlining procedures and processes) written primarily for larger city churches who might consider engaging church consultants. While the book is aimed at churches, those doing the consulting/training are not coming from a church-based paradigmatic approach.

To their credit, part four (“Looking at Model Homes”) seeks to demonstrate that the process outlined works in both small and large churches. The small church chosen is Faith Temple Baptist Church in Irving, Texas, a suburb northeast of Dallas. While I appreciated their attempt to include the small church in their vision, all the church illustrations I could find in the rest of the book were large (Willow Creek, Fellowship

Bible, Saddleback, etc.). The setting was suburban (not rural) and any upper level theological training was outsourced to the Center for Biblical Studies (Dallas Theological Seminary's lay night school). This plan is not helpful in rural America since such opportunities are not available. Also, why would you place your highest level leaders into the hands of seminary students who have little or no experience in actually living out any training in a local church setting? I found this more disturbing than helpful.

One helpful section of the book presented (in detail with examples) 16 different training venues under the two headings of process oriented (such as classroom, small group, apprenticing, coaching, self-led) and event oriented (such as seminar, retreat, workshop, huddle). These suggestions might help a rural farm setting in that we can do more intensive study at certain times of the year between harvest and planting seasons.

Stanley, Paul D. and Clinton, J. Robert. *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992.

Both authors appear to have a good grasp of how to establish and maintain healthy mentoring relationships. They recognize that this is an old concept that has newly caught fire again. "God did not create people to be self-sufficient and move through life alone. To return to healthy relational living will require recognition of this need and courage to change."⁷ The working definition given is that "mentoring is a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources."⁸

The book identifies a range of mentoring relationships. It outlines three main categories of mentors ranging from the more to the less deliberate. Intensive mentoring

⁷Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992), 37.

⁸Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 33.

(discipler, spiritual guide, and coach) is the more deliberate type. Occasional mentoring (counselor, teacher, sponsor) is midway between more and less deliberate. Passive mentoring (contemporary models, historical models) is the least deliberate.

Understanding that there is a continuum of mentoring relationships is extremely helpful. It grants a range of styles based on need in the one being mentored.

Chapter eleven is titled “The Constellation Model: A Range of Needed Mentoring”. The authors suggest both vertical and horizontal mentoring. Vertical mentoring includes both upward mentoring (being mentored) and downward mentoring (finding someone to mentor). Horizontal mentoring is peer co-mentoring. In these relationships, you find a peer outside your organization (external) and someone inside your organization (internal).

Because this book is written by two men serving in parachurch organizations, they do not flesh out what this might look like in a local church paradigm. But understanding the continuum of mentor/mentee relationships was extremely helpful.

Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*. Littleton: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995.

Strauch produced one of the few modern and thorough treatments of eldership. Its format is both biblical and topical. It is weighted toward the exegetical and philosophical rather than practical, but it was a ground breaking work that moved the conversation forward regarding elders in a wide variety of churches. Strauch proposed a “first among equals” type leader role parallel to Peter’s role among the apostles. This is based more on biblical precedent than command.

Strauch first offers a systematic theology for eldership under the subheads of pastoral, shared, male, qualified, and servant leadership. He then shifts to a biblical theology by tracing the teachings and practices of elders and leaders through Acts, Pauline epistles, and the pastoral epistles. He then explores 1 Peter 5:1-5, James 5:13-15, and Hebrews 13:17 and concludes with two practical application chapters on the appointment of elders and relationships between the elders and the congregation.

Strauch's seminal work ought to become required reading for elders and potential elders. While it does not answer all the practical issues and questions that elder rule churches encounter, this certainly helps form a way to think biblically about eldership and therefore create a platform for conversations about eldership.

Church-Based

Hull, Bill. *The Disciple-Making Church*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1990.

Bill Hull has observed and communicated a biblical theology of two ideas that the modern church has divorced: disciple making and the church. Disciple-making has long been considered the territory of the parachurch ministry. Modeled after the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ revealed in the gospels, materials and methods have been developed to replicate what Jesus did to make disciples. Bill Hull has done the church the great service of addressing the relationship between discipleship and the church. He argues that the church needs to change from a "Christocentric" model to a "churchocentric" model. In other words, the New Testament did not end with the gospels. Christ ascended to heaven. We must not lock discipleship into a methodology that the

New Testament itself does not promote. Hull observes that we must move as the New Testament does from Christ leading the apostles to elders leading a congregation.

Hull defines discipling as "the intentional training of disciples, with accountability, on the basis of loving relationships."⁹ While Christ the Son of God could disciple one on one, this is an inadequate model in the church era. "No individual can fully disciple another, because no one has the full arsenal of spiritual gifts and wisdom to adequately bring another to maturity in Christ."¹⁰

In Part 2, Hull moves us to the Jerusalem church, "the First Church" where we observe the move from Christ preparing leaders alone to a leadership community engaged in multilevel training. Acts 2:42-47 reveals the priorities of the first church: Scripture, one another, prayer, praise/worship, and outreach. God begins to break down the mind-set of the Jewish church to prepare the way for a worldwide ministry of the Spirit. Those who thought that this movement of the Spirit was only for the Jews must be persuaded that God's plan included the world.

In Part 3, Hull leads us to consider the period of outreach from Antioch, the new home-base for mission. The church sends out Paul and Barnabas to proclaim the gospel and plant churches. Not only do we observe the work of Paul and Barnabas as they minister the gospel, we observe them mentoring young men for leadership. While John Mark did not work out well during the first missionary journey, we see Paul and Barnabas taking on an intern. The most notable of these apprentices would be Timothy. Timothy ushers us into the next stage of the church in part 4, the discipling church.

⁹Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1990), 32.

¹⁰Hull, *Disciple-Making Church*, 35.

As Hull moves his readers toward his conclusion of a mission church mind-set, he demonstrates that the mission church reproduces. The stages of reproduction are demonstration (1 Thess 1:5), imitation (1 Thess 1:6), and reproduction (1 Thess 1:7, 8). Paul's letter to Ephesus reveals the priorities of the discipling church most clearly. The pastoral priorities include guarding the gospel by commitment to the Word, guarding the church by leadership development, and guarding the ministry by being a good model. Under his category of leadership development, Hull emphasizes creating a leadership community. "Every discipling church will eventually develop a leadership community; indeed, it must in order to move into reproduction and multiplication."¹¹ This community includes the current leaders and apprentices which seek to accomplish four things: develop instruction/teaching, create application vehicles, strategize for outreach/church planting, and provide an apprenticeship environment.

Hull has certainly captured in principle form a thoroughly biblical marriage between discipleship and the church. Only hints are given in this work that introduce the reader into the "how" aspects of such principles. These would need to be adapted into culturally sensitive applications. The appendix "Developing a Leadership Community" outlines the process for a broad perspective of cultural applications.

BILD Leadership Series

Of the twenty five courses produced, I will review four: *Acts, Pauline Epistles, Leaders and the Early Church*, and *Character of a Leader*. The first two courses (*Acts* and *Pauline Epistles*) are considered to be the foundational courses. The two courses will

¹¹Hull, *Disciple-Making Church*, 187.

enable a leader to know what he is aiming for in church ministry. The other two courses (Leaders and the Early Church and Character of a Leader) are drawn from series one to demonstrate one course on character and one on ministry.

Reed, Jeff. *Acts: Keys to the Establishment and Expansion of the First-Century Church*. Ames, Iowa: LearnCorp, L.C., 1987.

The stated place of this course in the total curriculum is "...to help a person develop a biblical philosophy of ministry and the skills required to put that philosophy into practice."¹² The overall objective of the course "...is to determine the fundamental principles regarding the mission of the church and its role in missions, developing guidelines and strategies from these principles for a local church's involvement."¹³ The course is church-based and helpful in equipping leaders by enabling churches to start with the end in view. This course pulls us back to the founding of the church to see its mission at the beginning.

The course is refreshing and challenging because it seeks to put the church where Christ placed it, as the centerpiece of His mission in the world. It will stir debate because the church has taken a backseat in missions for centuries. But it will force SRI church leaders to think through how the local church should move from spectator to participant in missions.

There is no explicit small or rural application in the course. I was concerned during my very first exposure to BILD in the early 1980's that it would be too academic

¹²Jeff Reed, *Acts: Keys to the Establishment and Expansion of the First Century Church* (Ames: LearnCorp, L.C., 1987), 12.

¹³Reed, *Acts*, 15.

for rural life. The BILD materials have been produced in Ames, Iowa, the home of Iowa State University. Ames is a very academic community. The leadership notebooks can be extremely intimidating for elders and other emerging leaders in rural communities.

The preface points to a possible way to adapt to the SRI setting: “When necessary, the courses and accompanying materials will be translated into the language of those using the courses, and cultural adaptations will be made to maintain the relevance and effectiveness for the various training situations.”¹⁴ While this was written for the benefit of those in other countries, it also has application in rural America. We may have to culturally adapt these materials here. Perhaps all the readings should not be assigned. In addition to this, under the course design explanation, the learner is reminded that the course can be taken at a basic or advanced level. These very good materials, then, can be adapted for rural Iowa or rural anywhere else. This will take some effort and honest conversation between leaders and learners. Learners must be stretched, but learners must be able to work at a learning level reachable according to their actual abilities.

Reed, Jeff. *Pauline Epistles: Strategies for Establishing Churches*. Ames, Iowa: LearnCorp, L.C., 2001.

The overall objective of the course “...is to determine the fundamental biblical principles for growing and strengthening (establishing) a church to maturity and developing a strategy for implementing the biblical forms and functions of a church necessary for making and keeping it strong.”¹⁵ This course extends our understanding from the Acts course which revealed the apostles’ understanding of the great commission

¹⁴Reed, *Acts*, 5.

¹⁵Jeff Reed, *Pauline Epistles: Strategies for Establishing Churches* (Ames: LearnCorp, L.C., 2001), 17.

by preaching the gospel and establishing churches. We will now grasp how Christ wanted His church to mature and grow. While there are areas of freedom, Christ also established a household order for His church to live under.

The Pauline Epistles are studied because of Paul's unique gift given to Him by Christ to reveal this household order. The Scripture passages and theological readings will all contribute to a fuller understanding and application of these directives. This course will provide missionaries, pastors, elders, deacons, men, and women an understanding of how the church should function and how they should relate to one another as family. This groundwork is essential for any leader or developing leader to grasp. This is church-based theology in action at the local level.

Once again, these materials are thoroughly church-based, but not particularly aimed at a rural setting. As mentioned above, a cultural adaptation may need to be made for those who find the readings too numerous or too difficult. The priority will be the course unit Scriptures and questions for discussion. While the readings are exceptional, they will be used as resources.

Reed, Jeff. *Leaders and the Early Church*. Ames, Iowa: LearnCorp, L.C., 2003.

“Course Objectives: The overall objective of this course is to bring leadership back to the center of the local church in a way that will empower churches to participate in the expansion of the gospel with the same vision and effectiveness as the first church at Antioch.”¹⁶ The Scriptures and readings of this course focus on the differences and roles of the various leaders of the early church. One of the significant readings (“The Two

¹⁶Reed, *Leaders*, 15.

Structures of Redemptive Mission” by Ralph Winter) distinguishes between local building leaders (modality) and universal expanding leaders (sodality). These leaders were intended to work in harmony, not in the uneasy divorce-like atmosphere between the church and the parachurch organizations of our day.

The objectives of the course are superb and the outlined training programs for ministers, elders, and deacons are (see project models) helpful and challenging.¹⁷ While adjustments must be made to fit the SRI setting, this tool will serve well to establish a multilevel training philosophy.

Reed, Jeff. *Character of a Leader: An In-depth Study of Character in the Pastoral Epistles*. Edition 1.0. Ames, Iowa: LearnCorp, L.C.

“Course Objectives: The overall objective of this course is to understand the biblical idea of qualified leadership and to determine the fundamental biblical guidelines for character formation in leaders and in the household of God.”¹⁸ This course focuses on character rather than knowledge or ministry skills. The Scriptures and readings challenge the learner to understand what God commands of the leaders of His church and to think biblically about how to make progress toward these qualities. The readings are numerous and lengthy. We may need to be selective on readings and shorten some assignments to adapt these materials to the rural culture.

¹⁷Reed, *Leaders*, 55-57.

¹⁸Jeff Reed, *Character of a Leader: An In-depth Study of Character in the Pastoral Epistles* (Ames: LearnCorp, L.C., edition 1.0), 3.

Reed, Jeff. "Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm". Paper presented to North American Professors of Christian Education, 1992.

In this presentation, Reed not only relates the problems with current theological education, he outlines the core principles of church-based leadership training found in Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles:

...training took place in the context of the ministry
training was viewed as an entrusting of the ministry to faithful men, by faithful men who were doing the work of ministry
confirming of those trained was fundamentally the responsibility of leaders at a local church level
training of leaders was not viewed as an end in itself or as an entity separate from the church, but was always understood to be a matter of establishing churches.

Reed reflects further that "...church-based training of the early church was clearly understood as a flexible leadership development strategy rooted in the life and ministry of local churches, in which gifted men entrusted more and more of the ministry to other faithful men while they themselves remained deeply involved in the process of establishing churches."¹⁹ This summarizes the spirit of leadership development in the New Testament and will challenge the SRI church to accomplish the task.

Reed, Jeff. "Church-Based Leadership Training: A Proposal Revisited". Reading "j" from *Leaders and the Early Church*. Ames, IA: LearnCorp, L.C., 2003.

Reading Jeff Reed's proposal moves a church leader back to the basics like getting a politician to read the Constitution of the United States. It makes perfect biblical sense as well as practical sense. While a little space is invested in critiquing the current theological education system, most of the paper is devoted to positive proposals to

¹⁹Jeff Reed, "Church-Based Theological Education: Creating a New Paradigm" (Paper presented to North American Professors of Christian Education, 1992), 8.

improve our approach. This summarizes in a few pages what every pastor and elder needs to grasp to understand the church's role in training leaders.

The section of this paper that traces how the early church trained her leaders is drawn from the book of Acts. The argument could be made that what we read there is descriptive and not necessarily prescriptive. However, what Luke selectively records for us in Acts fits hand-in-glove with Paul's epistles, especially those to Timothy and Titus. It is clear that Paul desired his apostolic assistants to establish churches that would include training leaders in their ministry plan (2 Tim 2:2). While the specific aspects of the proposal are not applied directly to rural churches, they are certainly universally applicable to all churches.

Small/Rural/Independent

Bierly, Steve R. *Help for the Small-Church Pastor: Unlocking the Potential of Your Congregation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.

The title of this work does capture its content. It's all about helping the small church pastor. He does understand that the small, rural church is a different culture from her city counterpart. He quotes Roy Oswald regarding going from a large church to a small church as being "...a cross-cultural barrier as tough as any foreign mission field".²⁰ The help offered comes in the form of advice of a seasoned veteran. He shares the characteristics of a small church, how to work as an insider, how to motivate toward change, how to invest your time and energy, and how a small church can reach out to the community.

²⁰Steve R. Bierly, *Help for the Small-Church Pastor: Unlocking the Potential of Your Congregation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 21.

Change comes slowly. He illustrates this with how long it took to get a church board to decide on updating an outdated, malfunctioning sound system and four consecutive weeks of discussion on what to do about the termites in the church building. This very readable book is realistic and encouraging. However, it does not address to any degree how to develop leaders in a SRI setting.

Burt, Steve. *Activating Leadership in the Small Church: Clergy and Laity Working Together*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988.

The title of this book made me think that the gap I was trying to fill by my thesis/project had already been filled 22 years ago. However, a reading of this work revealed that “leadership” means “getting volunteers” and “activating” means the pastor doing or not doing certain things so that people in the small church will volunteer. The pastor must be real, be a friend, be patient, give away power, and believe in the basic goodness of human kind.²¹ Not only does this conflict with biblical teaching, it traps the small, rural church into the very tradition I would like to see it escape.

The book contained one misguided but interesting exercise on assessment using a homemade card game. You make enough eleven card decks for everyone in the board/council meeting including the pastor. Each card contains one ministry activity with a brief description of that activity. The activities include counseling, preaching/leading worship, evangelism, management, administration, community leader, teaching, visiting, personal growth, leadership development (at least it made it onto a card), and ecumenical/denominational responsibilities. Everyone at the meeting arranges their

²¹ Steve Burt, *Activating Leadership in the Small Church: Clergy and Laity Working Together* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988), 31.

eleven priorities from highest to lowest the best they can without discussion. They then go around the circle revealing their first-choice card and telling why and so on. They suggest doing the top three and bottom three. Unfortunately, this was all about opinion. No sense of biblical input was mentioned.

Daman, Glenn. *Developing Leaders for the Small Church: A Guide to Spiritual Transformation for the Church Board*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009.

It is clear both from the title and the content that the primary target for this book about developing leaders is the church board of the small church. The primary need is to move the church board away from the notion that they are the caretakers of the building and the budget and the pastor cares for the spiritual needs of the people of the church. Daman presents an adequate summary of the issues involved by presenting a series of well-thought-out topical sermons on issues such as biblical offices, character, prayer, the role of a shepherd, the purpose of the church, and teamwork. Sprinkled through the text are short illustrative episodes of interaction between board members and pastor.

However, the book only takes the process to the level of principles. It sticks with the issues of what we should do but fails to move into the harder issue of how to accomplish this development. The closest the author came to "how" was under the subhead "Providing People with Training".²² While he offers the idea of providing resources, it appears that all the resources are outside the church. He mentions conferences and seminars being difficult due to expense. His remedy is to invite in parachurch leaders who represent experts in their field, area city pastors who specialize,

²² Glenn Daman, *Developing Leaders for the Small Church: A Guide to spiritual Transformation for the Church Board* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 146-147.

or phone visits with college or seminary professors. There appears to be no plan to utilize leadership resources right within the church itself. Therefore, while it was encouraging to read a work from a small, rural perspective, the book failed to offer much for specific church-based training materials or methodologies helpful to a SRI church.

Daman, Glenn. *Shepherding the Small Church: A Leadership Guide for the Majority of Today's Churches*. Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 2002.

This work addresses several issues of interest to this thesis/project. The author addresses small churches from the perspective of an insider. He has observed how the church growth and leadership conferences come from a mega-church model and tend to discourage rather than challenge and encourage the small, rural church pastor. He also includes a number of assessment tools in the appendices. And while not the main focus of the book, he does at least address equipping leaders.

While the author lives in both the church (two pastorates) and school (Western Seminary) paradigms, he quotes from Bill Hull repeatedly who is quite church-based in his thinking and ministry. He views leadership as growing out of ministry to others. The book seems to be more heavily weighted toward making disciples than training leaders. "Genuine leadership in the church is not found in the establishment of policies and church government, but in the discipleship of others. Leaders are appointed because they have spent time and devoted their lives to disciple and train others. They model and teach people to obey and follow Christ."²³

²³Glenn Damon, *Shepherding the Small Church: A Leadership Guide for the Majority of Today's Churches* (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 2002), 181,182.

When it comes to training, the author looks more outside the church than inside. His list of resources is as follows: regional seminars, conferences, leaders of missions and parachurch groups, other pastors and lay leaders, and packaged seminars in both video and audio tapes. He mentions an apprenticeship program and lists John Maxwell's five-fold process in apprenticeship: modeling, mentoring, monitoring, motivating, and multiplying."²⁴

This book is helpful at the principle level. It has the feel of a series of seminar bullet points. It is well thought out and challenging to the SRI church pastor. But is still lacks any particular approach and curriculum and is therefore limited in its helpfulness.

Klassen, Ron and Koessler, John. *No Little Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996.

This work is a welcome addition to the rather scanty literature collection that addresses church life in small town America. Ron Klassen and John Koessler have teamed up to produce a short but realistic and helpful volume. Both have some experience in small town churches. John is the chairman of the pastoral studies department at Moody Bible Institute. Ron is executive director of the Rural Home Missionary Association (RHMA) which plants and strengthens churches in small towns.

Part one captures the main point of the book: "Struggling with Significance". Chapter one addresses five myths of ministry success with five truths about biblical ministry. These five myths are:

The Numbers Myth: To be significant, a ministry must be big.

The Big Place Myth: To be significant, my ministry must be in a big place.

²⁴Damon, *Shepherding*, 206,207.

The Recognition Myth: One measure of the significance of my ministry is how much recognition I receive for it.

The Career Myth: Career advances are signs of a significant ministry.

The Cure-for-Inferiority Myth: If I can just succeed professionally, I'll no longer feel inferior.

These five myths are to be answered with five truths about ministry effectiveness.

The Quality Principle: God judges my ministry not by its size, but by its quality.

The No-Little-Places Principle: Wherever God has called me to minister is an important place.

The Glory-of-God Principle: God calls me to seek his glory, not mine.

The Vocation Principle: I am to approach my ministry as a calling, not as a career.

The Unconditional Love Principle: God loves me because he is love, not because of anything I do for him.²⁵

The remaining chapters simply seek to apply these principles.

Small churches and their pastors are not to seek significance by comparison with their larger counterparts, but to focus on what small churches do well. When applied to leadership, the authors contrast what they call the “business model” and the “family model”. The leader with the business model in view will act like a CEO. The leader with the family model in view will act more like a parent. The small church’s size and rural culture actually help in this tension. The leaders tend to be more personal and informal instead of distant and formal.

This book addresses the small-town church, so it addresses both the rural and the church-based aspect of this project. But there is little discussion about developing leaders. The pastor’s leadership philosophy and attitude is discussed at length, but the training of elders, deacons, teachers, pastors, or missionaries is outside the focus of this work.

²⁵Ron Klassen and John Koessler, *No Little Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), chapter 1.

McIntosh, Gary L. *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing Out the Best in Any Size Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999.

Gary McIntosh introduces two fictional pastors, an older one counseling a younger one, to present a book primarily about church growth (numerical) and specific challenges that pastors and congregations face in each stage. While sustained biblical discussion is minimal, there are some helpful human observations about church size and its effect on how the pastor views himself, the church, and the ministry of the church. The author slowly fills in the details of a chart throughout the book as a way of visualizing the message of the book. He calls it, "McIntosh's Typology of Church Sizes".²⁶

Factors	Small Church	Medium Church	Large Church
Size	15-200 worshippers	201-400 worshippers	401+ worshippers
Orientation	Relational	Programmatical	Organizational
Structure	Single cell	Stretched cell	Organization
Leadership	Resides in key families	Resides in committees	Resides in select leaders

There are more categories but they are not particularly germane to this project.

While the book tends toward stereotyping churches into three categories, some of McIntosh's observations are helpful. It was of interest that he states, "Leaders in large churches are most often chosen based on their abilities, skills, and gifts rather than their

²⁶Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All: Bringing Out the Best in Any Size Church* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 98.

blood lines.”²⁷ McIntosh says virtually nothing about training leaders, but he does recognize that productive leaders must have some skills.

O’Brien, Brandon J. *The Strategically Small Church: Intimate, Nimble, Authentic, Effective*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010.

This book was of special interest in that it highlights areas where smallness is not considered a liability but an asset. O’Brien surface four main areas where small churches more easily address four values in today’s culture. The four words of the subtitle capture these values: intimate, nimble, authentic, and effective. He even cites as an example a church that is growing in a populated area that is dividing and staying small on purpose so as to maintain these four values.

The chapter on leadership development was brief but interesting. It addressed the philosophy of developing leaders without offering a plan. He contrasted Evergreen Community Church in Portland, Oregon with the latest mega-church approach of having a multi-campus church with one teaching pastor that is “bigger than life”. O’Brien argues that this puts a premium on “excellence” instead of on training or developing another teacher/preacher. By dividing churches and develop leaders, Evergreen is multiplying leaders instead of campuses. This strikes me as a good philosophy. But the book reveals no published plan.

²⁷McIntosh, *One Size*, 56.

Conclusion

SRI churches need to equip leaders. Scripture lays out a sufficiently clear theology of the church and her leaders. All churches, including SRI ones struggle to apply their understanding of Scripture to their own setting as evidenced by the eight issues over which we have agonized in this setting. We have all the more reason to equip leaders well. But the SRI church lacks specific literature to aid her in her quest. Therefore, chapter four will seek to launch a church-based equipping program for leaders in such settings.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECT: LAUNCHING A CHURCH-BASED EQUIPPING PROGRAM

Chapter one demonstrated the need for equipping leaders in churches, even SRI churches. Chapter two laid down a foundational theology of the church and her leaders including eight applicational issues one such church has faced. The literature review of chapter three revealed the need for a work specifically aimed at equipping church-based leaders in a SRI church. This chapter will explore how this might be accomplished. The approach will be to start with assessment and then move to the training process.

Assessment (Starting with the End in Mind)

In educational circles, assessment is to render judgment on people in an area of knowledge or a skill by comparing them to an objective standard. Normally this is used to decide if a student may proceed to the next level of learning. Unfortunately, the church has historically only assessed attendance and offerings¹, not the progress of each disciple and leader. Biblical assessment would enable help church leaders know the members' spiritual progress and how leaders might help the people make progress toward Christ's goals. This section will therefore explore the need for assessment, who performs the assessments, who should be assessed, what should be assessed, tools for assessment, assessment processes, and general questions about the process.

¹ Every adult surely remembers the old traditional wooden rack on the church wall that had slots to slide cards in that displayed today's attendance compared to last year's attendance and perhaps the offering taken in Sunday School.

The Need for Assessment in the Church

Assessment is a part of everyday modern life. Certainly by the time a child begins his education, his knowledge and skills are assessed to see if he is ready to move to the next grade or level of learning. When an adult seeks employment or a vocation, someone must assess his competency for the work. Does the individual have the knowledge and skills to perform what is expected? If everyone could simply do what they wanted regardless of their readiness, the world would be a dangerous place. Visions of ten year old firemen on duty and little girl nurses who have only cared for dolls assure us this would not be a world that worked well. Assessment is a crucial part of a functional world.

But is assessment proper once we move from the world to the church? The church is presented as both a body and a family. Is there any place for assessment in the church? Our minds may think of the oft quoted (and misapplied) Scripture that says “judge not” (Matt 7:1) and conclude that Christianity and assessment are incompatible. But Jesus was not condemning judgment and assessment. It was hypocritical and/or self-righteous judgment that our Lord detested. We are not to concentrate on our brother’s speck in the eye while totally ignoring the log in our own. We are exhorted to first remove our log and then help our brother remove his speck (Matt 7:1-5).

Surprisingly, not only was Christ not against assessment, He positively endorsed it. Following the log/speck word picture, Christ immediately tells His disciples not to give what is holy to dogs or throw pearls to swine (Matt 7:6). Further, He warns them to beware of false prophets who are pictured as wolves dressed up as sheep. Disciples are to assess brothers, dogs, swine, and false prophets using the assessment tool of “fruit”.

“You will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:16a). We are to go beyond what others tell us for “not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter” (Matt 7:21). Disciples are to assess others based on their actions (fruit), not merely on what they say about themselves.

In the New Testament, all disciples are commanded and expected to make progress in spiritual maturity. The writer of Hebrews rebukes the Hebrew disciples for being infants when they should be teachers (Heb 5:12). Paul tells Timothy to “...take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all” (1 Tim 4:15). After exhorting the believers to add to their faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, Peter states, “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:8). Progress in spiritual maturity is to be more than a wishful goal. It is an expected reality.

This spiritual progress toward maturity was observable and therefore able to be assessed by others. Perhaps the clearest statement of assessment in the entire New Testament occurs regarding the selection of deacons. Paul wrote to Timothy, “These men (candidates for deacon) must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach” (1 Tim 3:10). The specific means of assessment are not revealed. But the fact of assessment is indisputable.

Who Performs the Assessments

But who does the assessing? The answer is surprisingly specific and broad. The New Testament makes mention of assessment coming from a number of different

sources. In Scripture, we can observe self-assessment, peer assessment, pastoral assessment, congregational assessment, and even outsider assessment.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is encouraged even though it has its limitations due to our propensity to self-deception. In the context of communion, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to conduct a self-assessment: "...but a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Cor 11:28). Paul continues this line of self-assessment: "But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged" (11:31). In Romans, Paul exhorts "...everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Rom 12:3). In the contexts of spiritual maturity and spiritual gifts/service, self-assessment is encouraged and even commanded.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment moves us outside our own views of our progress and allows others in the body of Christ to assess our progress. Peers are those whose place in the body is basically the same as our own. For example, we read in Acts 16:1-3, "Paul came also to Derbe and Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy...and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him...". Based on the assessment by other disciples in Lystra and Iconium, Timothy became Paul's apprentice and associate as a missionary church planter.

Pastoral Assessment

Pastoral assessment occurs at several levels. First, pastoral leaders are to assess other potential and actual leaders. Paul exhorts Timothy to entrust what he had learned from Paul to faithful men who would be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2). Timothy would have to assess who among the men of the church were “faithful” and therefore potential leaders. Current elders are to be assessed with care, especially when accused of wrong-doing. “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning” (1 Tim 6:19,20). Negative assessments are not to be avoided but are to be handled with great care since those in leadership are exposed to harsh and at times unwarranted criticism. Paul concludes this section by cautioning leaders against appointing leaders with inadequate assessment. “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others ...” (1 Tim 5:22).

Secondly, pastoral leaders must assess the progress of the disciples under their charge. Paul clearly bases his decision what to teach the Corinthians based on his assessment of their current spiritual progress (or lack thereof):

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? (1 Cor 3:1-3)

A similar assessment occurs in Hebrews 5:11-14 where the writer rebukes his readers for being dull of hearing, for needing once again for someone to teach the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and for only being able to handle spiritual milk and not

solid food. So then, in addition of self-assessment and peer assessment, pastoral assessment is a critical element in assessing spiritual progress.

Congregational Assessment

Congregational assessment describes a level of evaluation that looks at leaders from the point of view of the followers. Perhaps the most well known of this type of assessment occurs in Acts 6:1-6. While the disciples were increasing in number in the Jerusalem church, a complaint arose. Hellenistic Jews felt that their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. We read that the twelve summoned the congregation and said, “Brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.... The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen... these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them” (vv. 3,5,6). While using this passage to support congregational church government presses the passage too far, it certainly establishes the reality that the followers should be involved in the assessment of those who will lead. Who should determine that a potential elder is above reproach (1 Tim 3:2)? Current leaders dare not fail to encourage some level of assessment from the whole body as they evaluate and add other leaders to the team.

Outsider Assessment

Lastly, outsider assessment refers to the assessment of nonbelievers toward the person in view. This assessment, like self-assessment is subject to limitations. Peter

mentions that believers should "...keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame" (1 Pet 3:16). It is clear that the unbeliever is capable of giving a Christian an undeserved poor assessment. But this is not to say that the non-Christian world has no legitimate voice in assessing what they see in a Christian disciple. Outsider assessment is specifically mentioned among the qualifications for elders. "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife...and he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim 3:7).

Is assessment contrary to the work of the Spirit in the church? Certainly not! While there is no place for hypocritical or self-righteous judgment, loving and truthful assessment is a common New Testament theme. The New Testament encourages assessment from ourselves, peers, pastoral leaders, congregations (followers of the leaders), and even outsiders from the church and the faith.

Who in the church needs to be assessed? In this next section, the groups of disciples in the church to be assessed and equipped will be identified. Then, the section following will address what about each of them needs to be assessed and therefore addressed in the equipping process.

Who Should Be Assessed?

Paul's point in Ephesians 4:11-16 is that God has given gifted leaders to the church to equip the saints for their work of ministry toward the building up of the body of Christ. The word for equip itself hints at the concept of assessment. The Greek word

katartismos is used twice in the New Testament for restoring something in need of repair. In Matthew 4:21, it is used for “mending” fishing nets. In Galatians 6:1 it is used for “restoring” a brother who is caught in a trespass. Both contexts envision assessing the situation (torn fish net or sinning disciple) before addressing the need (mending or restoring). So it seems quite appropriate that as leaders equip the saints at any level of spiritual maturity, there should be both initial and on-going assessment of those being trained.

Once again, then, who is it that needs to be assessed for further training/equipping in the church? This project will address the assessment and equipping of all Christian disciples, teachers, older men, older women, deacons, elders, and ministers of the gospel.

All Christian Disciples

All Christians are expected to make spiritual progress. There was never a biblically intended dichotomy between a “mere Christian” and a serious disciple. But Scripture does address the issue of suspended spiritual growth or extended spiritual immaturity. As mentioned earlier, neither Paul nor the writer to the Hebrews proceeded to serve “solid food” to those who had not grown out of the spiritual “milk” stage of development (1 Cor 3:1-3; Heb 5:11-14). Both leaders adjusted their approach based on their assessment of the immature disciples they were addressing.

Paul seemed driven to discover how the disciples and churches he established were doing. The impetus for his second missionary journey was not at first to plant new churches but to see how the disciples were doing in the churches already planted. “After

some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are’ ” (Acts 15:36).

When Paul could not personally revisit a church, he diligently sought to find someone he trusted to send on his behalf. “For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love...we were comforted” (1 Thess 3:5-7). It was on the basis of this news that Paul then wanted to complete what was lacking in their faith (3:10). Surely assessment was an essential part of Paul’s strategy to make disciples and to plant and establish churches.

Even in the case of the “normal” or “healthy” disciple, there is an apparent need for some level of assessment. Paul’s exhortation to Timothy to “...entrust what he had heard from me (Paul) ... to faithful men who will be able to teach others also...” (2 Tim 2:2). Timothy would need some means by which to distinguish who was a faithful man. So, then, it is apparent that whether the disciples were temporarily stuck in immaturity or were considered faithful and ready for further training, all disciples were being assessed at least by those in charge of their spiritual progress.

Teachers

As responsibility in the church increases, assessment becomes more crucial. Responsibility increases influence. Spurgeon used to say that if one’s personal pocket watch is incorrect, only one person is affected. But if the public clock is amiss, half of

London will be off schedule. So it is in the church. The greater ones influence over others, the more necessary assessment and equipping becomes.

In the modern church, there are many who accept responsibility to teach who are not pastors or elders. Many churches have Sunday school where teachers teach children the Scriptures. Many have youth programs where teachers teach young people the Scriptures. There are men's groups and women's groups. There are Bible studies of various sorts. All these groups need maturing and equipped teachers.

When we turn to the Scriptures themselves, we discover an expectation that all disciples are to be teachers to some extent. While the main focus was the need for spiritual maturity, the writer to the Hebrews did say "...for though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need for someone to teach you..." (Heb 5:12). Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, communicates that his expectation was that to some degree, all would teach. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another..." (Col 3:16).

But even beyond this, there is certainly a teaching gift within the church that is never limited only to church leaders. For instance, Paul's letter to the Romans lists a number of gifts, one of which is teaching. "Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly; if prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation..." (Rom 12:6ff). Certainly the other gifts mentioned are not to be exercised by leaders only. It is reasonable to conclude that there will be those who teach who are not pastors or elders.

Assessment for teachers is necessary. God holds teachers to a higher standard according to James. “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (Jas 3:1). So while the elders do not do all the teaching in the body, they are overseers who are responsible for all that is taught. They must have some mechanism by which to assess the life and teachings of those who teach others.

Older Men

The New Testament church is pictured as a family. God is our Father. We are His children. We are brothers and sisters toward one another. But the equality of the brotherhood is to be tempered based on age. Paul exhorts Timothy to exercise discernment in how he treats the varying ages of the two sexes. “Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim 5:1,2). This view of the church is also apparently expressed by the apostle John. “I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one” (1 John 2:13).

While Paul clearly states that the older women are to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5), he seems to infer that the same process transpire between older and younger men even though he does not state it as clearly. He cared very much about the life style of the older men of the church. “Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance” (Titus 2:2). Why? Were they to be like this just for their own sake? In context, it appears that it was also for the sake of the

whole church family, especially to the younger men. Older men, then, as the spiritual fathers of the community need to be assessed and encouraged to maintain a good example for those who follow in their steps.

Older Women

Older women, as the mothers of the community, are responsible to teach the younger women how to carry out their role and tasks. “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible...” (Titus 2:3ff). Paul writes this to Titus in the context of his exhortation, “...speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (2:1). Titus then was responsible to make sure that the older women of the church were not only teaching that which was good, but that they were living lives “...fitting for sound doctrine”. As such, Titus was in a position in which he must oversee some assessment of the older women in the church.

Deacons

As mentioned earlier, perhaps the clearest statement for the practice of assessment occurs when Paul speaks of appointing deacons. “These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach” (1 Tim 3:10). If, as many think, that the table servers chosen in Acts 6 are a prototype for deacons, we see a similar assessment used. “So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore,

brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, who we may put in charge of this task” (Acts 6:2,3). The disciples are asked to do an assessment that resulted in the appointment of seven men for this work of service.

Paul lists the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. It is obvious that one assessment before serving as a deacon will not suffice. Given that even godly people make poor choices, there must be an ongoing assessment for deacons so that those who serve continue to demonstrate these same qualities.

Elders

Paul reminds Titus why he left him in Crete. “...that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife...” (Titus 1:5ff). Once again, it is obvious that Paul was not simply concerned about the life of the potential elder right before his appointment, not caring how he lived life once appointed. The rest of the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that the elder must be continually assessed and held accountable to God’s standards. Unrepentant elders are to be publicly rebuked (1 Tim 6:19,20). It is clear that God holds the other elders accountable for unqualified elders. “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin” (1 Tim 5:22). If this is the case at the initial appointment of an elder, it would also hold true for one who becomes unqualified during his tenure as an elder. Assessment, both initial and on-going, would therefore be a necessity for elders.

Ministers of the gospel

The term “ministers of the gospel” can be used as a broad term to capture the leadership gifts given to the church to equip the saints including apostles and prophets (if still operational) as well as evangelists and pastor/teachers. Paul understood that his initial assessment came from God. He states, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service (or ministry), even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor...” (1 Tim 1:12,13). This is mirrored at the human level in Paul’s words to Timothy to entrust Paul’s teachings to faithful men who will be able to teach others (2 Tim 2:2). Just as Paul had chosen Timothy to minister with him based on the assessment of those who knew him best, so Timothy was to choose others based on a demonstrated and observed faithfulness.

The need for on-going assessment is surfaced numerous times. Right or wrong, Paul judged John Mark to be unqualified to travel and minister with him and Barnabas due to his desertion on the first trip (Acts 15:36-41). Paul periodically mentions men who have become disqualified for ministry. “This command I entrust to you, Timothy...that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Tim 1:18-20). Paul even entertains the fearful notion of his own failure. “Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:26,27). Therefore, the

need for both initial and on-going assessment for ministers of the gospel is clearly established.

What Should be Assessed?

Having established the need to assess the groups mentioned above, the task now is to decide what areas need to be addressed and therefore assessed in each group. In an attempt to be both thorough and yet simple, three broad categories have been chosen (beliefs, practice, and service):

1. Beliefs will include biblical understanding and what is traditionally thought of as “theology”.
2. Practice will include the disciple’s lifestyle or their “walk” (Paul’s term used in Ephesians).
3. Service will focus on ministry to others whether basic service expected of all disciples or the special service for which they have been gifted by God to help the body grow.

Some aspects of the Christian life will no doubt overlap even these broad categories. But the categories will at least serve to help us better think about how to “...grow up in all aspects ...” (Eph 4:15), not merely in one area of life.

Let’s now look again at each of the categories mentioned previously (all Christian disciples, teachers, older men, older women, deacons, elders, and ministers of the gospel) and observe what the Scriptures encourage us to assess in the saints toward equipping them in all aspects of life (beliefs, practice, and service).

All Christian Disciples

Beliefs (All Christian Disciples)

One of the seminal passages on both assessment and equipping is Ephesians 4:11-16. Paul reveals that God gave gifted leaders to equip the members of the body for the work of service until they reach maturity. Christ desires the individual members of His body to be mature as well as the body as a collective whole. What the individual disciples believe is a crucial part of that maturity. Paul states it this way: "...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine..." (Eph 4:13-15). The word picture of immature children gives way to one of a tiny ship being helplessly driven by wind and waves. The untaught disciple is vulnerable to every new and old false teaching that comes along. Therefore, what each disciple believes is a crucial element in this assessment.

Ephesians is quite representative of all of Paul's epistles to churches. Half of this letter is devoted to doctrine (beliefs). The epistle to the Romans is even more heavily weighted toward doctrine (eleven of sixteen chapters). Paul the apostle understood that doctrine was in fact the foundation for the Christian life. What one believed about God, Christ, the Spirit, the gospel, sin, Satan, angels, the church, and other teachings mattered. Certainly Paul cared how believers behaved. But Paul knew that behavior found its roots in belief. It is not sufficient that these beliefs be taught, it is crucial that they are learned. Therefore, all disciples must be assessed as to their understanding of foundational doctrines.

Practice (All Christian Disciples)

Biblical beliefs must be followed by biblical practice. Paul continues by saying, "...but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ..." (Eph 4:15). Paul and the other apostles were always careful not to leave the impression that the gospel of grace was to lead to a life of continued sin. "But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph 4:20-24).

Christian practice is an expansive category. First there are practices that must become a part of every disciple's life regardless of age or sex. This would include both the external actions as well as the internal attitudes demanded of every disciple. The fruit of the Spirit come to mind as a relatively short summary of this category. But secondly, there are the practices which are commanded for those disciples who are in a certain role or station of life. Here we find the particular commands for wives, husbands, parents, children, younger men, and younger women. These differ from each other by God's design and order of the home and the church. For instance, in the home, parents are not told to obey their children nor are husbands commanded to submit to their wives. In the church, women are forbidden certain activities due to the creation order and God's design.

Service (All Christian Disciples)

The movement of the Ephesians 4 passage ends with service. Not only does Paul say that the gifted leaders are to equip the saints for their “work of service”, he concludes this paragraph stating that “...we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph 4:15,16). Each part to the body has some work to do and must do its work properly or the body is handicapped. Each member is to serve the whole body, not simply learn right beliefs and practice proper behavior as an individual.

Maturity will never be achieved without all three: beliefs, practice, and service. This passage (Eph 4:11-16) serves as the only proper foundation for the entire plan for equipping leaders. Before a person can effectively lead, he or she must first be a properly functioning part of the body, the church. No amount of specialized skill or gifts will make up for failure to learn proper beliefs, practice, and service in the body of Christ. Thousands of gifted people have done more damage than good to the body by failing to grasp this simple truth.

Teachers

Beliefs (Teachers)

Part of the stricter judgment James warns teachers about would include what they teach (Jas 3:1ff). The teacher’s teaching will flow out of what he/she believes. This seems to be the thrust of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 12. “You brood of vipers, how can

you being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of what which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment” (Matt 12:34-36).

On the positive side of this, Paul instructs the Colossian believers to “let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...” (Col 3:16). It is clear that one's teaching will only be wise if the word of Christ richly dwells within the teacher. Church leaders must therefore assess the beliefs of those who will teach in the church.

Practice (Teachers)

When Jesus addresses the false prophets, He pictures them as bad trees bearing bad fruit. He concludes, “So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter” (Matt 7:15-21). The real fruit of a teacher is what the teaching does in his/her own life. Doing the will of God is good fruit. The absence of such fruit means that the teacher is doing more harm than good. As the writer to the Hebrews put it, “...solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Heb 5:14). Only those who practice the truth can discern good and evil. Therefore, those who will teach others must be assessed regarding their practice by those who oversee the body of believers.

Service (Teachers)

Every teacher who is equipping others must model service to others in the body of Christ. Paul is clear in Ephesians 4 that gifted leaders are given to the church "...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service" (Eph 4:12)... Every member of the body of Christ is to be equipped to serve. Part of equipping is modeling. Jesus specifically demonstrated the importance of leaders serving others through the act of washing His disciples' feet. "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:14,15).

Older Men

Beliefs (Older Men)

"Older men are to be... sound in faith" (Titus 2:2). Those who function as spiritual fathers of the community must be mature in their understanding of the truth. It is of interest that the apostle John writes to the spiritual fathers "...because you know Him who has been from the beginning..." (1 John 2:13). Solid theological knowledge ought to characterize those who function as spiritual fathers.

Practice (Older Men)

"Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance" (Titus 2:2). Consistent with the rest of Scripture, Paul did not desire spiritual mouthpieces with no practice of the truth they taught. Therefore, the lifestyle of these older men must be assessed.

Service (Older Men)

The attitude Timothy was to have toward older men gives us the clearest signal regarding the role the older men were to fulfill in the church. Any corrective speech toward the older men was to be conducted as an appeal to a father” (1 Tim 5:1). We may therefore reason that this was the role they filled in the church. Their service ought to be the steady hand of a deep knowledge and love of God that provides stability in the church. What a father is supposed to be for his family, the older men were to be for the church.

Older Women

Beliefs (Older Women)

When Paul addresses Titus, he wants him to “...speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Regarding the older women, Paul wanted Titus to insure that they were “... teaching what is good...” (Titus 2:3). Earlier in his letter, Paul exhorts Titus to appoint elders who would be “...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he (the elder) will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). Titus along with the elders would certainly therefore assess the beliefs of the older women who would be teaching the younger women of the church. This ministry fits the meaning of the office of elder which means “overseer”.

Practice (Older Women)

“Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine...” (Titus 2:3,4). Those leading the way for the younger women must practice godly behavior. These women are functioning as the spiritual mothers of the community and must therefore first practice the truth before they teach it.

Service (Older Women)

The belief and practice of the truth by these older women opens the door to an avenue of service to the younger women, that of teaching and training them. “Older women likewise are to be...so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored” (Titus 2:3-5). The service of the older women to encourage the younger toward godly behavior, if followed, will enhance the ministry of the gospel in the community. Lack of godly behavior among the disciples will dishonor the word of God.

Deacons

Beliefs (Deacons)

While deacons are not primarily teachers for the body of Christ, their understanding of the truth is still crucial. Paul instructs Timothy that deacons “...must be men of dignity... holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Tim 3:8,9). Even the service offered by deacons must proceed from men who understand and believe the truth. Therefore, the beliefs of deacons must be assessed.

Practice (Deacons)

“Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain... these men must first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach... Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households” (1 Tim 3:8-12). Being tested before serving is a clear statement for the need of assessment of a man’s practice of the truth before serving as a deacon.

Service (Deacons)

Paul gets no more specific than “...let them serve” (1 Tim 3:10). If the Acts 6 appointees are a prototype of deacons, they are to relieve the spiritual leaders of the church of things that distract them from prayer and the ministry of the word. They may also be in charge of enabling the body to minister to the physical needs of people in the church or associated with the church. Certainly men who should serve as deacons will not just start a life of service after they are appointed. Their servant heart will be evident prior to any official appointment.

Elders

Beliefs (Elders)

As teaching and leading responsibilities increase, the assessment of beliefs and practice becomes more critical and detailed. Since the elders are charged with teaching the church and overseeing its health, what an elder believes is extremely important.

“...the overseer must be above reproach... holding fast the faithful word which is in

accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:7-9). One of Paul’s greatest concerns as expressed to the Ephesian elders was that “...savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be on the alert...” (Acts 20:29-31). This indicates that those who are elders can stray from the truth and become savage wolves that attack the flock. Nowhere is there a more direct plea for on-going assessment of elders! Be on the alert! Be aware of what your elders teach and what they believe!

Practice (Elders)

Initial and on-going assessment of elders is what the so-called “qualification” passages are all about. “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to much wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity... and not a new convert... he must have a good reputation with those outside the church...” (1 Tim 3:2-7). The companion passage in Titus 1 parallels these assessment points.

Service (Elders)

The service of the elders to the church is summarized by Paul’s words to the Ephesian elders. “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased

with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Paul’s words to Titus focus on both the positive and protective nature of the shepherding ministry of the elders. An elder must be “...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine (positive) and to refute those who contradict (protective). Elders must be able to do both because “...there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers...” (Titus 1:9,10). In this way, the elders work with the gifted pastors/teachers to equip the saints so that they may be mature in both beliefs and practice of the truth (Eph 4:11-16). An elder’s ability to serve the saints in this way must therefore become part of the church’s assessment process.

Ministers of the Gospel

Beliefs (Ministers of the Gospel)

Paul’s words to Timothy capture the care that a minister of the gospel must take regarding his beliefs: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Failure to do so has deadly consequences on the hearers. “But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some” (2 Tim 2:16-18). The beliefs of a minister of the gospel must be assessed initially as he enters the ministry and continually as he works in ministry. It is evident that starting well does not guarantee finishing well.

Practice (Ministers of the Gospel)

While many texts regarding the practice or life style of the minister of the gospel could be noted, Paul's words to Timothy capture what he is to flee and what he is to pursue. "Now flee from youthful lust and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Tim 2:22). The minister of the gospel must be assessed not only on the basis of his giftedness. He must live out the truth as well as teach the truth. A man who does not live the truth should not attempt to teach the truth.

Service (Ministers of the Gospel)

Assessing ministers of the gospel encompasses the so-called pastoral epistles. His service might be summarized in three points: preaching the word, correcting those in error, and training faithful men to teach others.

First, the minister of the gospel must be able to preach the word. Paul the apostle solemnly charges Timothy to "...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim 4:1,2). The gifts given by the Spirit will determine whether his content will focus on the gospel (evangelist/church planter) or the teaching (pastor/teacher).

Second, the minister of the gospel must be able to correct those in error. Paul stated, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth..." (2 Tim 2:22-24). Unfortunately, one necessary aspect of ministry in the church is dealing

appropriately with those who have strayed in doctrine, practice, or both. Nowhere is one's maturity tested as when a member of the community willfully rebels against the revealed will of God.

Third, the minister of the gospel must be able to train faithful men to teach others. Once again Paul states, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). The faithful minister of the gospel must have an eye to the future. It is not enough to simply use one's gifts to minister to the current generation. A full-orbed ministry in the church must include the training of those who will lead in the future.

In reviewing the assessment aspect of this project, section one established the biblical precedent and need for assessment. Section two introduced the categories of individuals in the church that need to be assessed (i.e. elders, deacons, etc.). Section three then addressed what is it that we are assessing about them (i.e. beliefs, practices, service). Section four will now address what tools will be used for these assessments.

Tools for Assessment

Traditionally, churches do very little regular or purposeful assessment. CBC certainly fits this norm. People volunteer for the work that needs to be done. For instance, Sunday school teachers sign up, get their materials, and teach their classes. Unless there are major problems, the leaders are thankful and satisfied that the need is met. Historically, the best example of regular assessment was an annual elder review. The elders would take a meeting for each elder evaluation. It began with the elder's self

assessment of his qualifications and his service and was followed by the other elders giving their verbal perspective on how the elder under review was doing. But as of this writing, even these assessments have ceased, overtaken by other more seemingly pressing matters.

Assessment and evaluation sound critical and negative. It sounds like the proverbial mean-spirited boss calling in the harried employee and letting him know how he failed last year. Only in the church's case, the employees are not even paid! When we think of assessing people in the church, it must be approached in a way that is consistent with biblical truth, culturally sensitive, and practically effective. It must not violate the concepts of loving one another and building one another up. It must be an application of "...speaking the truth in love..." (Eph 4:15) that leads to the body building itself up (Eph 4:16).

The assessment tools for this project are found in the Appendix. There are assessment tools for each category of people in this project (all disciples, teachers, older men, older women, deacons, elders, and ministers of the gospel).

Assessments for All Disciples

Annual Assessment for All Disciples (Appendix A)

This assessment has several segments. It is drawn from a statement in 2 Peter and the seven major propositions of the teaching sections of the epistles as summarized by C.H. Dodd.² It also offers assessment regarding the young men, the young women, employees (servants), and employers (masters).

² Jeff Reed, *The First Principles: Becoming a Disciple* (Ames: LearnCorp Resources, 1998), 33.

First Principles: Summary and Response Assessment (Appendix H)

This tool aims to help each disciple assess his/her understanding and practice of the teaching of the New Testament by limiting its scope to the current year's teaching in our church meetings and/or small group discussions. This particular assessment is based on the sessions in the discussion series *The First Principles*, Series 1 by Jeff Reed.

Giftedness Assessment (Appendix I)

This tool produced by BILD International is introduced as follows: "The following assessment guide should be completed after reading and reflecting on the 'Community Life and Ministry' summary found in the Project Guides and Models section of the BILD course, Pauline Epistles: Strategies for Establishing Churches." The guide is divided into sub-sections based on 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 which mentions varieties of gifts, varieties of ministries, and varieties of effects. A series of questions under each of these enables a disciple to think through the type of ministry and gift he or she is drawn toward. A final section enables the believer to envision what ministries to pursue in the future.

Assessment for Teachers (Appendix B)

This tool was developed for those who teach in the church in capacities other than elder or pastor. It will be used in conjunction with the annual teachers' evaluation and planning meeting.

Assessment for Older Men (Appendix C)

Since older men are to function as the spiritual fathers of the church, their character and demeanor are crucial. The New Testament addresses these issues in Titus 2, 1 Timothy 5, and 1 John 2:13,14. This tool summarizes these traits to help older men assess their progress.

Assessment for Older Women (Appendix D)

The older women are clearly instructed to teach/train younger women. They must therefore model what they desire to see develop in the younger women. Paul speaks of this in Titus 2 and 1 Timothy 5. This tool summarizes these traits to help older women assess their progress.

Assessment for Deacons (Appendix E)

This tool is intended for both initial and ongoing assessment of deacons. It summarizes the qualifications written by Paul in 1 Timothy 3.

Assessment for Elders (Appendix F)

This tool will be used in two different settings. First, it will be used in helping determine the readiness of a prospective elder. Second, it will be used to encourage growth in current elders. In both cases, the tool will be used for self-assessment as well as assessment by others.

Assessment for Ministers of the Gospel (Appendix G)

Much like assessment for elders, this tool will be used for both perspective and current ministers of the gospel. In both cases, the tool will be used for self-assessment as well as assessment by others.

With the assessment tools ready for all disciples, teachers, older men, older women, deacons, elders, and ministers of the gospel, the following section will summarize in brief the process for using the assessment tools with each of these groups.

Assessment Processes for Each Group

All Christian Disciples

For the annual assessment, each elder will be responsible to schedule the family units in his small group. If there are families not involved in a small group, the pastor and/or another elder might schedule an annual visit to invite them into this process and see if there are issues needing clarification.

In a rural setting, some elders will be farmers. They will want to schedule their families so as to avoid the planting and harvest seasons. Other elders may have other heavily scheduled seasons of the year to be avoided. Rather than requiring this annual assessment to happen at the same time of year for all, it will be left up to the individual elders to schedule and then inform the other elders of when he will handle assessments and how he is progressing through the year.

The assessment that is connected with the *First Principles* will be filled out as the individual completes each booklet. It should become part of the reflection and journaling

that occurs during session 6, “Reshaping Our Lives”. These assessments could become part of the individual’s file or portfolio that record work accomplished.

The giftedness assessment is not tied to a particular curriculum at this point. Introducing this tool might fit quite naturally during the study of Ephesians (series 3; book 4).

Self Assessment

All household members of age should submit their self assessment forms to the elder in charge at least two weeks prior to the assessment visit. This would include the husband, wife, and any children eighteen or older still living in their parents’ home. The two weeks would give the elder time to prayerfully read through and note his reflections. The forms will be available in the church office or mailed/emailed upon request. After the elder’s visit, the forms will be filed in the individual’s personal file in the church office.

Peer Assessments

The two peer assessments, as stated earlier would be completed by at least one person of the same sex from the small group and one other person from within the church but outside the small group. These forms, in keeping with the biblical goal of speaking the truth in love, would first be submitted to the person being assessed. After they read their peers’ thoughts and comments, the disciple being assessed would sign (indicating they had read them) and submit these to the elder in charge. Submitting the peer assessments must still occur two weeks before the elder’s assessment visit to give him

time to process what he reads. Therefore, the disciple being assessed would want to receive them early enough to read and process the comments before submitting them to the elder. The forms would be available in the church office or mailed or emailed upon request. Once the visit has occurred, the elder will file the forms in the individual's personal file in the church office.

Pastoral/Elder Assessment

Prior to receiving any assessment forms (self or peer), the elder in charge should complete an assessment form on each family member of age in the household. He should make a copy and then give the original to the disciple being assessed two weeks prior to his assessment visit. This would insure that the elder prayerfully assesses the individual in an active way and not merely reactively based on the input he receives from others. This would also encourage "speaking the truth in love" and mutual respect. The elder would show the same courtesy of two weeks advance notice of his personal assessment regarding the individual disciple as he expects from them about themselves. The elder would file his own assessment and any notes from the visit in the individual's personal file in the church office. The elder should make copies of any written (or spoken) suggestions he makes during the visit on means towards progress he recommends. The members of the household can be encouraged to pray for one another as they listen in on one another's assessments. Discussions on sensitive issues can certainly be held in private.

Teachers

Those who teach carry a greater responsibility in the body. While teachers will participate in the same assessment process as outlined under the “all Christian disciples” section above, they should have the opportunity for one further assessment and one additional meeting. It would seem appropriate that the pastor/teacher or another elder in charge of teachers conduct an additional annual interview with each teacher that would only focus on their teaching ministry. This would be a time to check on how their ministry is progressing and address any issues of concern. All the teachers with the pastor/teacher or other elder in charge would assess the teaching ministries of the church, checking for curriculum issues, overlaps, or gaps to be addressed.

Older Men

While there is an additional section to complete in the assessment tools for older men, the process will remain the same as that of the “All Christian Disciples” assessment process. The two peers and the elder in charge must make sure to complete that section as well.

Older Women

As was the case with older men, the older women have an additional assessment tool section to complete, but the process will remain the same as previously outlined. The two peers and the elder in charge must make sure to complete that section as well.

Deacons

Initial Assessment

When the elders determine that a man should be considered for deacon, he should be approached about his openness to serve. If he is willing, he and his wife should each fill out the deacon assessment guide and submit them to the elders two weeks in advance of the elder interview with the candidate and his wife. Each elder should fill out the same form, make a copy, and give the original to the deacon candidate two weeks in advance of the elder interview of the candidate and his wife. One week prior to the interview, the elders will be given copies of each others' assessments of the deacon candidate. In this way, once the interview occurs, everyone has already read and reflected on all assessments and the process can move beyond mere sharing of information. Concerns can be addressed and determinations made.

Our church has found it helpful to invite the whole church community to offer their assessment of a man being considered for deacon. The same form could be used. We have always asked that any criticisms be from named sources (not anonymous) so concerns can be pursued and addressed.

On-going Assessment

The assessment process for a deacon and his household could look the same as for all others in the body. The deacon assessment tool could then be used in a self evaluation and a peer evaluation with all the deacons. Once again, the deacons should all fill out their forms two weeks in advance of the assessment discussion so that the deacon being assessed has the opportunity to reflect on the thoughts of his peers. All the other deacons

should also have the opportunity to reflect on the written self assessment of the deacon being assessed. All forms should be filed in the deacon's personal file.

Elders

Initial Assessment

The same initial assessment process should be followed with a potential elder as with a potential deacon. All involved will complete the elder assessment tool guide as described above for deacons and in the same timely manner. The elder and his wife (if married) will be interviewed in the same fashion as with a candidate for deacon.

On-going Assessment

More adjustments must be made once we think through the process of assessing an elder. The elder cannot be in charge of his own assessment. The elder should not be in charge of assessing his wife's progress as a disciple nor his eighteen year old and older children still living in his home. It seems that another elder could be assigned to the elder's family so that the elder's family goes through a very similar visit as everyone else. The difference would be that the elder would then go through a peer review with all the other elders just as the deacon under assessment would with all the other deacons. Forms should be submitted in advance as was the case with deacons. The constituents and outsiders assessment process has been described above under general questions considered.

Ministers of the Gospel

As was the case with elder, another elder could be appointed to conduct the home visit with the family of the minister of the gospel. This assessment would be conducted in similar fashion to the deacons and elders. The constituents and outsiders would be handled in the same way as for elders. All concerned would complete the assessment tool in the same timely fashion as mentioned for elders and deacons above.

General Questions Regarding Assessment Process

How might this process be introduced?

Since introducing assessment might be viewed with suspicion in a rural, Bible church that has little or no experience with assessment, we must be wise and culturally sensitive. The preliminary name for this assessment might be “Family of Families Spiritual Progress Assessment”. To prepare everyone for such a major change, the elders would begin with a sermon or short series in our church meeting combining the biblical teaching about assessment summarized earlier in this chapter and the mutual responsibility between leaders and people: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you” (Heb 13:17). Assessment would be welcomed if viewed as an application of a particular text of Scripture and not merely as a decision by the elders to check up on everyone.

How frequently would we attempt this process?

It seems that making this an annual expectation would be viewed as consistent and caring. Every family of the church would anticipate a visit from the elder in charge of their small group. Rather than multiplying visits to assess the husband and wife separately, the elder could address all members of the household who are of age. Each member would be ready for their assessment in all appropriate areas. For instance, a man might have filled out a self assessment form for himself as a disciple, as a teacher, and perhaps as an older man. His wife would be prepared for all appropriate areas for her such as a disciple, a teacher, and an older woman. All assessment forms filled out by others on their behalf would have been gathered and submitted in advance to the elder in charge. Divided among the elders, this could be an attainable annual event. Since the staff pastor/teacher could not participate in every one of these visits long term, he could accompany any elder who needed to observe such a visit for training and/or elder assessment purposes. The pastor could certainly be available for follow-up visits with particular problems.

How would single women and widows be approached?

Not wanting to set up inappropriate meetings or put individuals in uncomfortable situations, the elder could be accompanied by his wife or by another elder or deacon. Having his wife with him can make this feel more like a social call, but as long as there is clear communication about the goal of the visit, an elder and wife could go together on all the visits if desired and possible.

At what age should these assessments begin?

CBC has no history of any “rite of passage”. Many of our youth leave for college after high school. But those who stay just slowly slide into being considered an adult. It seems preferable to mark this transition by an age or event. Age eighteen is certainly a well-known age for conferring at least some of the rights of adulthood in our culture. It seems that there should be further instruction given to prepare young people for this transition and not merely rely on reaching the age of eighteen. Perhaps an interview with two elders who review his/her understanding of salvation and the church with any follow-up instruction to match the need would be appropriate. A written statement of faith and purpose might accompany this time to mark entry into the responsibilities of becoming a fully functioning member of this local body of Christ.

How many peers should participate in these assessments and how should they be chosen?

For a starting point, we would suggest two peer assessments. These should be two people of the same sex as the person being assessed. One could be from the individual’s small group and one from outside the group who knows the person in question well. These peers can be chosen by the person being assessed unless they defer that decision to the elder in charge.

Should others who participate in the assessment be present during the visit?

It seems best not to turn these visits into a meeting. If both a husband and wife each have two peer assessments, it would change the dynamics of the visit to have that many people present. The intent is to have this assessment be a time of speaking the truth

in love toward the building up of the body of Christ. For these members to be better equipped to be fully functioning members of the body, those under assessment would want the circumstance to remain a private visit not a group therapy session.

How might elders invite honest input from the members of the body without encouraging a critical spirit?

Perhaps the best method would be for the other elders to agree on two individuals in the body to fill out the elder's assessment form. Perhaps one man in the elder's small group and one man outside the elder's small group could be chosen. The other elders could certainly consider suggestions from the elder under assessment but make the final decision themselves.

Who might be included in the "outsider" assessment for elders?

This category of assessment is an attempt to concretely address Paul's statement to Timothy that elders "...must have a good reputation with those outside the church..." (1 Tim 3:7). Either the elder or elder candidate himself could ask a neighbor or an associate (of the same sex) with whom he works to write this or another elder could follow the suggestions of the one being assessed if that seems more appropriate. At least one such assessment or at the most two would be sufficient.

What should be included in the "outsider" assessment?

Having an outsider and perhaps an unbeliever using an assessment tool with many Scripture references attached seems inappropriate. A simple sheet of paper (perhaps with the church's letterhead) quoting 1 Timothy 3:7 with a brief explanation that the church is

trying to take this aspect of assessment seriously would suffice. The person would then be free to write a paragraph, a few lines, or a simple list of character traits that demonstrate the man being assessed has a good reputation outside the church.

Can this process every be adjusted and simplified?

Adjustments in these assessment tools and process will need to be made based on use and evaluation. If there are ways to simplify this process, those processes should be put in place. If gaps are discovered, those must be addressed. The crucial issue is that assessment becomes an integral part of the church's life and that it really be "speaking the truth in love" so that the body might progress toward maturity, a body in which all "...attain to the unity of the faith...", all grow up in all aspects into Him who is the Head (Christ), and all participate in ... "the proper working of each individual part" so as to cause "...the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Eph 4:13,16).

Training Process (Training with Assessment in Mind)

Having established a methodology and tools for assessment, we will now proceed to the actual training process. While some of these training forums are already in operation at CBC, others are only projected.

Training Forums: Current and Projected

CBC believes (or at least teaches) that leaders are to equip the saints so that they do the work of ministry with the result that the body is built up toward maturity. After all, that's what Ephesians 4:11-16 teaches. Since Ephesians is in the Bible and Bible

churches believe the Bible, Bible Church leaders should be equipping leaders who then equip the saints. But believing something, even sincerely believing something, and having meetings and activities does not necessarily produce the reality those beliefs should lead to. How might we intentionally use these events to further this biblical paradigm?

This church currently conducts a number of meetings and activities with the goal being to equip the saints. These training forums would be the main meeting of the church, Sunday school, small groups, mentoring, special courses, focused ministry teams (i.e. evangelism, worship, etc.), other scheduled meetings (i.e. elder meetings and deacon meetings), and special seminars, retreats, or events. After noting each of these training forums, this segment will explore how CBC plans to use these opportunities to equip all disciples, teachers, older men, older women, deacons, elders, and ministers of the gospel.

The Main Meeting of the Church (Current)

The main meeting of the church occurs on Sunday mornings and lasts from one hour and fifteen minutes to one hour and thirty minutes. The current format is to worship in song for fifteen to twenty minutes, read the Scripture text of the morning, have a biblical exposition for about forty minutes, followed by announcements, sharing, a season of prayer by individuals in the congregation, and a closing hymn/song. On the first Sunday of each month, we start our meeting an hour earlier by not having Sunday school, meet around tables, abbreviate the singing, and have the Bible exposition followed by a longer time of sharing and prayer. We then celebrate the Lord's Supper and enjoy a potluck meal together.

Sunday school (Current)

Sunday school meets for one hour (9:30am – 10:30am) with a fifteen minute break (which gives the adult groups a little flexibility on ending time) prior to the meeting of the church on Sunday mornings. Prior to this format, the adults met together in one group to discuss the previous week's sermon passage. This time was lead by the pastor/teacher. We then divided into three smaller groups (lead by elders) which also discussed the sermon passage and the application to life. These groups were formed to reintroduce the concept of small groups to our church and open the opportunity for each elder to shepherd a smaller group of believers. Since our people travel from such long distances and have such full schedules, we offer some adult small group opportunities during the Sunday school hour. We expanded this time from 45 minutes to one hour to allow these groups some time to share and pray as well as discuss Scripture.

Small groups (Current)

Small groups are being reintroduced to our church body after several earlier attempts ended. The extended sharing and prayer time at the Lord's Supper meeting was instituted partially to address the previous concern that small groups damaged the sense of oneness of the whole church. In addition to the groups meeting during the Sunday school hour, several groups meet in homes during the week. The home groups give Sunday school teachers the opportunity for a small group experience since they are not available for one on Sunday mornings. The home groups have sufficient time to also share about life situations and pray for one another.

Mentoring Relationships (Projected)

Mentoring relationships normally pair a more mature disciple with a less mature disciple. The elders have not presently started any planned and purposeful mentoring relationships. Because the interaction is less formal and one on one, this relationship can address issues of greater breadth and depth and become more intensely personal. This is a presently untapped method of equipping disciples and potential leaders. Mentoring must be kept in perspective lest we reestablish the misconception that discipleship happens best only in one-on-one settings. Mentoring is intended to supplant not replace the other training forums.

Special courses (Projected)

Special courses have been offered for specific interests and concerns. These have typically been offered on Sunday evenings and week-day evenings. Several video series have been offered such as Christian marriage, developing a biblical world view, and Christian parenting. A course from BILD international on the book of Acts was offered on a week night. This avenue of special courses to targeted groups has not as of yet been used very extensively. Since our rural community school observes a church night (perhaps a benefit unique to some rural settings) on Wednesday nights, it seems to be the best choice for offering a forum for equipping disciples and leaders. Such courses would be offered during the non-growing season after Christmas holidays (January to April).

Focused Ministry Teams (Current and Projected)

Focused ministry teams range from evangelistic Bible studies to participating in the local meals on wheels delivery program. They would also include the elders, deacons, and worship teams. These are avenues of service where members of the body act on their faith by serving God and others. But they are also learning experiences as those who serve reflect on what they did and assess how they might serve more effectively. Jesus encouraged the disciples to share problems and joys when they returned from ministry activities. Preparation, observation, and debriefing can make any activity a learning event. Our intent is to have every disciple understand their giftedness and serve with a team in some aspect of ministry that furthers Christ's mission. Discerning ones gifts will be a topic studied and discussed later under the small group forum.

Scheduled Meetings (Current and Projected)

Elders, deacons, teachers, and worship teams currently conduct regularly scheduled meetings to further their respective service agendas. These meetings offer another possible learning experience. The elders meet weekly. The elders and deacons meet together monthly. The deacons meet on an “as needed” basis. Sunday school teachers meet once a year to do an informal assessment of the previous year, reflect on what is going well, address problems, and communicate about plans for the up-coming year. Worship teams practice once a month to rehearse new contemporary songs. While there are always multiple agenda items that need attention, some form of on-going equipping of leaders could also occur at these times. Both out-of-meeting preparation and in-meeting discussion time would have to be limited to twenty or thirty minutes.

Training Programs

The section above surveyed the training forums both current and projected in CBC. Now the task at hand is to fully utilize our equipping and serving opportunities with all the groups of people who need to be equipped in the areas of beliefs, practice, and service goals reflected in the assessment tools and processes set forth earlier in this project. The mode of presentation for this section will be to discuss each group of people moving through the appropriate training forums.

Equipping All Christian Disciples

When Jesus envisioned disciple-making, He commanded His disciples to make other disciples by baptizing those who believe and then “...teaching them to observe all that I (Jesus) commanded you...” (Matt 28:20). Jesus’ commands include beliefs, practices, and service. Paul’s view of disciple-making in Ephesians 4 while using different terms, also encompasses a disciple’s beliefs (“...until we all attain to the unity of the faith...”), practices (“...according to the proper working of each individual part...”), and service (“...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service...”). These categories were introduced in the assessment section of this chapter when discussing what should be assessed in each member of the body.

While this project’s focus is on training leaders, it is imperative that the training of all disciples be addressed. Ephesians 4 directs that the leaders of the church equip the saints for the work of service. Potential leaders do not appear out of nowhere. They are disciples who have been equipped and are faithfully carrying out their individual part

within the body of Christ. Therefore, equipping all Christian disciples is in fact taking the first steps of equipping (potential) leaders.

Before looking into the various equipping forums through our meetings, a brief overview of ordered experiences for disciples new to our church is necessary. Those who demonstrate interest in our church will be visited by two elders. Based on their assessment of the individual/household's understanding of the gospel, we will recommend a six week summary study of the gospel (Christianity Explained). For sake of clarity, we intend to have most participate in this study unless their understanding of the gospel is clearly established.

Next, the interested person(s) will be encouraged to pursue our "New Testament Principles of the Church" course. This will be offered either in the Sunday school time or on Wednesday nights. Within this format, we introduce these inquirers to our church's understanding of major doctrines, our purpose, as well as our practices. This course enables the learner to see that Christ's body is composed of members who work properly toward the building up of the rest of the body and that we must all move toward maturity.

Once a disciple is committed to our church body, what does that maturing disciple need to believe? What practices ought to become a part of his/her life? What acts of service should each disciple render? How do these beliefs, practices, and works of service become part of the disciple's everyday life? These are the questions that have motivated every discipleship series ever written. While we of course have all kinds of freedom to develop a culturally sensitive approach, we must remain true to the directives given us by our Lord and His apostles.

When it comes to a disciple's knowledge, it is easy for the western mind to gravitate toward the "systematic" or "topical" approach. This approach isolates issues/topics such as God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, baptism, the church, and so forth as worthy biblical topics to be studied. While this is a popular approach, it is not the way the New Testament was written. Many New Testament letters do contain what we might call a "theology" or belief section and a practice/service section, but they do not follow a topical format. Paul's "theology" section in several of his letters (i.e. Romans, Ephesians) focused on a deeper understanding of the gospel. While he wrote much about God, Christ, Scripture, and man, he spoke of these in light of a larger purpose.

The other downside to systematizing biblical truth is that it tends to make it dry and uninteresting. These truths are part of letters and narratives that connect them to everyday life. Who wants to memorize a specific attribute of God with proof text that is detached from life? It is the life situation that makes us appreciate God's attribute. Systematizing truth does to the Bible what merely memorizing dates, names, and places does to the study of history. It makes it boring and detached from life!

Equipping disciples with regard to their beliefs should follow the New Testament pattern of teaching a deeper understanding of the gospel. When it comes to a disciple's practice, we must follow the New Testament pattern of highlighting those lifestyle practices that are first universal among all Christians (i.e. love God's other children, forgive those who wrong you, speak the truth, etc.) followed by practices appropriate to disciples in specific life situations in the home (husband, wife, parent, child), in the church (male/female, leader/member, older/younger), and in the world (master/slave). Regarding the disciple's service, care should be taken to address service that all

Christians are responsible to render (the many “one another” passages) and that which each disciple uniquely offers to the church (spiritual gift) and to the world (vocation).

Equipping all disciples will be approached through the grid of the church’s current or projected training forums: main church meeting, Sunday school/small groups, mentoring, special courses, focused ministry teams, and special events, seminars, or retreats.

Equipping Disciples: Main Weekly Church Meeting

The Sermon. Disciples must be devoted to the apostles’ teaching. Paul the apostle taught, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16,17). Therefore, all of Scripture is profitable for all disciples. CBC places an emphasis on exposition of Scripture. The pastor/teacher will therefore consistently model Bible teaching that gets at the author’s intent of any passage addressed. Teaching must read the text and then explain the author’s meaning in context with culturally relevant applications.

To aid in this process, the elders will be encouraged to include sharing their understanding of the main idea of the sermon passage and one possible application in their conversations after the church meeting. This would encourage further discussion of the text, its meaning, and its application within the body.

We will also encourage at least one follow up discussion in homes on the sermon text with the same basic format. The head of each household will share his understanding of the main point and one possible application. The rest of the household will then share

what they learned (main idea and one application). Periodic brief skits in church meetings could model this for everyone. Follow-up questions should be directed to the teacher for clarifications that may be beneficial to the whole church.

Public Prayer. Since prayer is one of the activities that the early disciples in Jerusalem devoted themselves to, we desire to make prayer one of the emphases in our meetings. At each Sunday church meeting, we open the floor for anyone to offer praise or request prayer. We then open the floor for others to lead out in prayer for those things shared. Since the life of a disciple is a supernatural life, we must learn to pray and not faint or be anxious. The elders and deacons should model appropriate sharing and praying through this time.

Singing. All members of the body should come to the meeting of the church with the word of Christ dwelling in them richly so that they can participate with a heart that pleases God: "...with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16). God is the One who made singing part of the Christian discipleship. While not all are gifted in music, all believers are to participate in singing in response to God's glorious grace and majesty.

The Lord's Supper. There is no one way to practice the Lord's supper properly. To avoid the sense that communion is merely "tacked on" at the end of a normal meeting, CBC has altered one meeting per month. We start our meeting an hour earlier than normal (Sunday School hour is cancelled). We set up tables in our meeting room, sit

around the tables, worship in song, have a time of biblical instruction, and then conclude with an extended “body life” style meeting. More time is devoted to talking with one another about what is going on in life. More time is devoted to prayer. Time is allowed for members to share what they are learning in Scripture. We then celebrate communion around the tables. This is followed by a potluck fellowship meal. This format has served to change the feel of communion from a ritual to a family fellowship remembering Christ’s sacrifice. This approach seems tailor-made for the small, rural church. Of course, if the auditorium has pews, the meeting would have to be moved to the fellowship hall.

Time Before and After the Meeting. The writer of Hebrews had high interactive expectations for church meetings. He wrote “...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb 10:24,25). The modern, western church meeting leaves little opportunity for interaction. We tend to emphasis one way communication except during congregational singing. But even without changing the western paradigm, we can begin maximizing the times before and after the formal meeting time of the church. While many use these times just for catching up on news, they could be considered as the perfect time for what the writer of Hebrews had in mind. As we catch up on one another (not a biblical commandment, we should pursue those things we are commanded to do with one another (bear with, build up, care for, comfort, confess faults, be devoted, encourage, forgive, greet, honor, be kind to, love, pray for, be of the same mind with, serve, consider how to spur on to love and good deeds, and submit to). To see this happen will take both

teaching and modeling, but it will make church meetings more fruitful. Once again, periodic skits could model good conversations.

Equipping Disciples: Sunday School and Small Groups

Some aspects of discipleship do in fact need a smaller setting than the western style church worship service. Everyone remembers that three thousand believed the gospel and were baptized after Peter's day of Pentecost sermon. It is much less remembered how they met together. A careful reading reveals that those early disciples met in two settings: in the temple and in homes. "Day by day continuing with one mind *in the temple*, and breaking bread from *house to house*, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart..." (Acts 2:46,47). We read earlier in Acts 2 that "...they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." It is instructive to ponder which activities occurred in which setting. The meals were shared in homes and they continued with one mind in the temple, but where did they devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, and prayer?

We read later that at least some teaching occurred in homes: "...and every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). The emphasis of the temple meetings appear to have been evangelistic until persecution began: "And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1). So the aspects of establishing the disciples shifted to meetings in homes (groups smaller than the entire congregation).

It is of interest to observe the repeated statements that the early Gentile churches met in homes: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in the Lord...also greet the church that is in their house” (Rom 16:3-5; also 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15,16; Phlm 1,2). Small groups make many of apostles' directives to the disciples more feasible to obey. Consider the following examples: bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:1), consider how to stimulate others to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24,25), look out for the interests of others (Phil 2:2:4,5), and admonish/encourage those in need (1 Thess 5:14).

Unless churches move to a house-church format completely, the next best application seems to be small groups gathered to accomplish these purposes. This is the direction in which CBC of Strawberry Point has moved. What form then will the training in these groups take?

Small Groups and Biblical Content. Regarding training materials, certain characteristics are crucial for a church that desires to make disciples in keeping with New Testament revelation. The materials must be church-based, meaning that they take the whole New Testament seriously so that the church is at the center of God's plan. These materials must acknowledge the distinction between spiritual milk and meat, seeking to identify foundational principles for the life of a disciple wanting to participate fully in Christ's work in and through the church. They must encourage learning in community, not self-instruction or merely one-on-one discipleship. They must not be limited to Christian beliefs but also address life-style practices in the home, church, and world. The discipleship approach must have moved out of the Christo-centric gospel era and into the church-centered epistle paradigm. The materials must not make maturity the only goal

but must engage both the individual disciple and the church in Christ's mission. Finally, disciples of all ages and walks of life must be addressed, not merely college student types who have not yet made life's big choices (career, marriage, location, etc.).

The *First Principles* series written by Jeff Reed (BILD International) will be the foundational studies for our small groups. While no series of man-made materials will be perfect, this set does meet the criteria mentioned above. A detailed review of this set is included in brief in Appendix J. Each small group will initially be led by an elder who has worked through the *First Principles* series. Therefore, all the small group leaders will be one-minded regarding the principle being taught and discussed. If the elders desire to make changes in the passage or readings, this can be done in advance of the discussion. If there are other related principles the elders wish to introduce, they can be inserted. We will work through the principles interactively so that these principles become truly ours once we are convinced together that they are scriptural.

Because this series was developed in a mid-western university city, some in our rural church setting may find a few of the readings difficult. If this occurs, we will pair them with a mentor to work through the readings privately. The main focus must always be the Scripture passage itself. If a few of the readings are found to be too difficult by too many, we will replace them with simpler readings, write replacements ourselves, or simply encourage them to focus on the Scripture passage alone.

The following is a projected seven year plan for small groups. Adjustments will need to be made because the small groups that meet during the Sunday school hour normally take two weeks per session. Evening small groups may complete a session in

one meeting. There are a few other important studies inserted to supplement the *First Principles* as needed or desired by the leaders.

The first year will focus on *The First Principles*³ series one. This first series leads a disciple to not only consider his/her personal commitment to Christ, but then to understand their place in God's church, the church's place in Christ's mission, and how to cultivate habits that deepen those commitments.

Year two will feature the second series which explores how marriage, family, and lifework can unite to offer an even deeper investment into Christ's mission through the church. These aspects of life are often missed in typical discipleship material.

Year three will be devoted to an Old and New Testament "Walk Through the Bible" learning experience. This will be enhanced by a study of Vaughan Roberts' book *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-line of the Bible*⁴. The second part of the third year will be devoted to the discussion of Arthur Miller's book *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be*.⁵

Year four brings the groups into the third series of *The First Principles*. The first booklet is entitled "Handling the Word with Confidence". It offers principles for Bible study emphasizing the author's intent of the book as a whole. After working through the booklet, the groups will be challenged to try the approach on several short books of the

³ Jeff Reed, *The First Principles* (Ames, IA: LearnCorp Resources, 1998).

⁴ Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

⁵ Arthur Miller, *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999).

New Testament such as Jude, Philemon, and 3 John. If needed, the year will be filled out by a group study of the book *The Peacemaker*⁶ by Ken Sande.

Year five will include the study of book two of the *First Principles* series three *Unfolding the Great Commission: First Principles from Acts*. This study will be supplemented with *The Heart of Evangelism*⁷ by Jerram Barrs to flesh out the concepts in our postmodern age.

Year six will focus on book three of the third series *Laying Solid Foundations in the Gospel: First Principles from 1 & 2 Thessalonians*. Following that study, if time permits, the group will finish the year reading and discussing *Decision Making and the Will of God*⁸ by Garry Friesen.

Year seven will complete the *First Principles* series three. Book four *Catching God's Vision for the Church* is a study of Ephesians. Book five is *Living in God's Household* and is a study of the Pastoral Epistles. At the beginning, all groups will start this seven year cycle together. They need not move at exactly the same pace. As people are added to the church or young people grow up and stay, new groups will be formed and start at the beginning. Some who have already completed the cycle may desire to go through the series again to either lead or serve as mentors for younger or less experienced disciples.

⁶ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1991).

⁷ Jerram Barrs, *The Heart of Evangelism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001).

⁸ Garry Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, revised (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2004).

Small Groups and Fellowship. As mentioned earlier, many of the more interactive relational activities expected of believers in Scripture would occur more naturally in a home meeting than in a large group setting. Meals were shared among the Jerusalem believers not as they met as a group of three thousand in the temple courtyard, but as they gathered together in homes (Acts 2:46). This family-like atmosphere of sharing all of life together is an essential part of discipleship and spiritual development. After all, the church is called and compared to a family, not a classroom or school.

At some point, even a small rural church reaches a size where intimate fellowship can no longer occur on a church-wide basis. This is a cultural difficulty in a rural church since knowing what is going on with everyone is part of living in small communities. Our attempt to keep the sense of wholeness while still dividing into small groups has focused on the weekly whole church sharing/prayer time and the monthly church family meal and Lord's supper meeting. This has at least eased the tension felt by those who want to hold on to the sense of unity of the whole.

In the setting of the small group, the "one another" commands can be more realistically fulfilled in a mutual fashion than can occur in a larger group. In a small group, a disciple can allow himself to be known as he is and the group can help to encourage, exhort, and challenge him as a brother. The elder in charge must purpose that such a family atmosphere exists so that this aspect of discipleship can occur.

Small Groups and Prayer. While we will maintain our time of large group sharing and prayer, the same activity in a small group produces a greater degree of openness regarding life circumstances and therefore a greater specificity in prayer. While we are

exhorted by Paul to “...be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints...” (Eph 6:18b), we can only pray specifically for a limited number of believers. The small group setting opens the door for each disciple to pray for others and be prayed for by others who know and care for him.

Small Groups and Pastoral Care. Paul exhorted all the Ephesian elders “...to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28b). Small groups offer the opportunity for each disciple to be under the regular and close care of one of the pastors (elders) of the church. The old paradigm of one pastor maintaining a close relationship with all the members of the church was always unrealistic. Now, greater attention can be given to assess spiritual progress and head off potential disasters. This also has the positive effect of creating a need for more leaders who are not simply board members but shepherds.

Equipping Disciples: Mentoring

Mentoring is old skill being recovered. It is sorely needed in the church. Rowland Forman states, “A chapter on church-based mentoring wouldn’t have been necessary a hundred years ago. People in that era wouldn’t have called it mentoring. They would have talked about an apprentice who learned alongside a craftsman – a mode of training that would have been so commonplace as to hardly be worth mentioning.”⁹

A sufficient introduction to mentoring is found in chapter six of *The Leadership Baton* by Forman, Jones, and Miller (2004): “Mentoring: A Personal Learning

⁹ Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones, and Bruce Miller, *The Leadership Baton: An Intentional Strategy for Developing Leaders in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 99.

Process”¹⁰. The chapter identifies five phases in mentoring: identification, imitation, instruction, involvement, and release. While there is more that can be said, this offers enough of a primer to get things started. A much more complete description can be found in *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* by Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton. Reviews of both can be found in chapter 3 (Literature Review).

Not all needs can be met in group settings. The need for individual attention, whether at regular times or occasional intervals, is recognized both in Scripture and in modern training literature. We need to adopt a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” mentality. Timothy was trained during his youth at his church in Lystra (Acts 16:2) and was then mentored by Paul in the setting of the ministry of the gospel and church planting/establishing.

Mentoring relationships might be generated in a number of settings in our church. Small groups, visits before and after church meetings, expressing a need in large group sharing, in special classes held on specific topics, or by pastoral recommendation. For these relationships to work, they must be mutually agreeable. To stimulate mentoring, the elders will make it a matter of prayer, they will practice amongst themselves, they will practice it with other men in the church, and the skill will be taught in special teaching/seminar sessions.

While there may also be group settings (such as an annual retreat or half-day seminar) where older women are teaching younger women and older men are teaching younger men, these would obviously also be a subset of mentoring relationships. We

¹⁰ Forman, *The Leadership Baton*, 99ff.

must use all available means to accomplish the task of making disciples in the local church.

Equipping Disciples: Special Courses

In a rural, northern United States setting, the best time to offer additional courses will be during the dormant agricultural season and after the Christmas holidays (January to April). During this time frame, it seems wise to offer all disciples learning opportunities that will challenge and deepen their beliefs, practice, and service in the Lord. The following is an initial four year curriculum for all disciples.

Year one of this special course series will feature Christian marriage. One of the most helpful studies our church has reviewed is the *Love and Respect* series by Emerson Eggerichs.¹¹ This tool includes a book, workbook, and dvd. This provides flexibility of approach after assessing the group's best learning style.

Year two of this series would focus on Christian parenting. Depending on the age of the families interested, we would offer one or both of studies by Tedd and Paul Tripp. Tedd Tripp's book *Shepherding a Child's Heart*¹² offer biblical and practical help in training children of all ages. Paul Tripp's book *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens*¹³ offers practical approaches for parenting teens. Once again there are options regarding book and dvd based on the learning styles of those interested.

¹¹ Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2004).

¹² Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995).

¹³ Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997).

Year three of this series would offer a course on finances. A very popular and well received approach to this topic is Dave Ramsey's *The Total Money Makeover*.¹⁴ This man has taken an intense topic and created a practical but entertaining course. It also is available in book and dvd format.

Year four of the series would focus on a Christian world view using the video series "The Truth Project" from Focus on the Family¹⁵. The dvd series is a broad overview of the conflicts between the Christian world view and how the world views truth through the various disciplines of human knowledge.

Equipping Disciples: Focused Ministry Teams

As members of the body become established in the apostles' teaching, they are to move toward being a functioning member of the body of Christ. This means that they must begin discovering their gift(s). This need will be addressed as discussed earlier in year three of the small group curriculum by studying/discussing Arthur Miller's book *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be*. As the primary application of that discussion, everyone needs to invest themselves in some aspect of service that fits their gifts and abilities. The elders must therefore seek to establish ministry teams that can work together in serving the body and the world. Present and possible future ministry teams would include evangelism/church planting, worship teams/music, leadership (elders and deacons), teaching (Sunday school, youth group, special courses, seminars, retreats), and mentoring/counseling.

¹⁴ Dave Ramsey, *The Total Money Makeover* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2003).

¹⁵ "The Truth Project" (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 2004-2010).

Equipping Teachers

Teachers who are not elders or pastor/teachers may not have been in view when James and Paul warned teachers of stricter judgment. These men may have been addressing teachers who stand in positions of authority, like Paul and Apollos. However, the passages do highlight how seriously God views how people handle His truth. James said, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (Jas 3:1). Paul’s statement also demonstrates how carefully those who teach others must be as they handle God’s truth:

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. (1 Cor 3:10-13)

In several places, all members of the body are exhorted to teach one another. For instance, Paul states, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16). While volunteer teachers may fit more in this category than that which is addressed so soberly by the apostles, we certainly must take the work in a serious fashion.

In light of this, the training offered our volunteer teachers will not differ greatly from that which everyone in the body receives (refer to the equipping all disciples section). A few extra equipping opportunities will however be offered to our teachers.

Equipping Teachers: Mentoring

The pastor/teacher of CBC oversees the teachers and curriculum in Sunday school and youth group. He will seek to place a less experienced teacher with a more experienced one so that an informal mentoring relationship can occur. Observation, experimentation, and interaction can occur and enable the novice or less experienced teacher the freedom to learn without complete responsibility.

Equipping Teachers: Special Courses, Seminars, Retreats

As mentioned earlier, the annual teachers meeting will give way to a minimum of two meetings per year. Two books that will formulate several years of discussions are *Teaching to Change Lives*¹⁶ and *Nurture that Is Christian*.¹⁷ The first book will become the basic text for the teachers. Copies of the book will be loaned out to the teachers. The laws of the teacher, education, activity, communication, heart, encouragement, and readiness will form seven conversations that will occur over a three and a half year cycle. The book on nurture will be a resource to the pastor/teacher on developmentalism. The current schedule for these meetings is the third Saturday morning in January and June, meeting from 10:00am until 12:00 noon.

¹⁶ Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive* (Multnomah: Multnomah Publishers, 1987).

¹⁷ James C. Wilhoit and John M. Dettoni ed. *Nurture that Is Christian: Developmental Perspectives on Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).

Equipping Older Men and Women

The same foundational training for all disciples will be used for equipping the older men and women. They will be encouraged to complete series II and III of the First Principles in the small group setting, thus gaining greater understanding regarding the Christian family and greater skill in understanding the biblical author's intent for a book and passage. They should also participate in the small group study of biblical theology utilizing the Roberts' book *God's Big Picture*. They will of course be welcome to participate in the BILD leadership courses.

The older men and women will be viewed as a resource to the body to mentor/train younger men and women. The primary venue for this will be mentoring, not classes. The pastor/teacher will periodically teach on or at least mention mentoring as an application of a normal training method within the body of Christ. One training in mentoring learning event will be conducted each year for older men and women together. The preliminary plan is to use the first Saturday morning in February for this event. Godly older men and women should become familiar with the mentoring principles outlined in the Stanley/Clinton book *Connecting*¹⁸ noted in the literature review. They would not need to read the whole book, but focus on the basic principles in chapters one and two coupled with the suggestions in chapter five called "Intensive Mentoring: The Coach". These chapters would form the foundation for this training event.

It is important that we not communicate that our older men and women must turn into scholars. They are mentors. Their value is in their experiential knowledge and

¹⁸ Stanley, Paul D. and Clinton, J. Robert, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*, Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992.

application of Scripture. Even the lessons learned through failure are important to be passed on to the next generation.

In addition to the mentoring training, all the men and women (both young and old) of the church will be invited to participate in separate annual seminars or retreats on biblical manhood and biblical womanhood. These events would build on the foundation of John Piper's description in his seminal first chapter of the book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*¹⁹. These events will annually encourage the formation of mentoring relationships between the older/younger men and the older/younger women. Each event will also highlight one aspect of biblical manhood and womanhood as the teaching and discussion focus for the day. The preliminary schedule is to hold these seminars on the first and second Saturdays of March each year.

Several resources will serve as the foundation for these men's retreats and seminars. Two books will be included, one by Stephen B. Clark²⁰ and the other by James B. Hurley.²¹ The concise online article by Albert Mohler "The Marks of Manhood"²² will serve as a good foundational summary of what it means to be a man. We will also utilize the helpful website constructed by the "Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood".²³

¹⁹ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, ed., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991).

²⁰ Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1980).

²¹ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981).

²² Albert Mohler, "The Marks of Manhood," <http://www.boundless.org/2005/articles/a0001093.cfm> (accessed February 10, 2011).

²³ "The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood," <http://www.cbmw.org> (accessed February 10, 2011).

The resource list for women will include the same website as well as the books by Clark and Hurley with an additional work by Dan Doriani.²⁴ We will also explore the use of the work by Susan Hunt, *Spiritual Mothering*,²⁵ as a tool for mentoring.

Equipping Deacons

The deacons (and emerging deacons) will be equipped in the same manner as all members of the church (see that section). In their small groups, *The First Principles* series one and two should enable the deacons to understand their personal lives as disciples and how their families' lives fit into the mission of the church as a whole. The third series will help them better grasp sound doctrine both in their beliefs and their practice as they learn to discern the author's intent of a biblical book.

Equipping Deacons: Mentoring

One of the small group studies involves assessing ones giftedness. Each deacon will have worked through that study and discussion in that setting. The pastor/teacher will set up visits with each deacon to discuss further his understanding of his gifts and abilities and how he might best use what God has given him in His service.

Equipping Deacons: Special Courses

The deacons will join the elders in a three year cycle of special courses. During year one, the deacons will study Jeff Reed's course on Acts.²⁶ During the second year, the

²⁴ Dan Doriani, *Women and Ministry: What the Bible Teaches* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003).

²⁵ Susan Hunt, *Spiritual Mothering: The Titus 2 Model for Women Mentoring Women* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1992).

deacons will join others in training to study the course on the Pauline Epistles.²⁷ During the third year, the deacons will study the course *Leaders and the Early Church*.²⁸ The first two special courses will help deacons see the mission of the church with greater clarity. The third course (Leaders) will help the deacons see how their role fits into the entire leadership team and the progress of Christ's mission through the church. For economy of effort, the elders, deacons, and others in training will study these together.

As the deacons grasp the mission of the church as a whole, they will more deeply appreciate their role in the progress of the gospel. The church needs men who can rally the church to meet physical needs and to assist the elders so as to free them to pray and minister the word of God.

These special courses will start in January and end in April to avoid holidays and the growing season of rural, northern America. Since the rural local school observes Wednesday night as church night, that night offers the best opportunity to offer special classes. Some deacons might be intimidated by the size of the course notebooks, the number of pages to read, and the number and length of the projects to produce. Each BILD course offers both a basic and advanced version which partially addresses the problem. Further adjustments might include assigning only the Scripture passages and discussion questions, adding a few selected readings, doing all the readings but no written assignments, or completing all assignments as listed.

²⁶ Jeff Reed, *Acts: Keys to the Establishment and Expansion of the First Century Church* (Ames: LearnCorp, L.C., 1987).

²⁷ Jeff Reed, *Pauline Epistles: Strategies for Establishing Churches* (Ames: LearnCorp, L.C., 2001).

²⁸ Jeff Reed, *Leaders and the Early Church* (Ames: LearnCorp, L.C., 2003).

Equipping Deacons: Scheduled Meetings

To minimize numbers of meetings, the deacons will use a portion of their regular meeting time to be better equipped for service. This will only occur during the time of year when they are not taking special courses on Wednesday nights. So during regularly scheduled meetings from May through December, the deacons will work through a three year cycle of study and discussion material. During the first year, they will study and discuss the book *Resources for Deacons*²⁹ to better serve Christ, the church, and the community in which we live. During the second year, they will discuss the BILD course *Character of a Leader* to better understand and practice the qualifications of a leader as well as understand the challenges faced. During the third year, the group will review the “Walk Through the Bible” (Old and New Testaments) and the book *God’s Big Picture*³⁰ to stay solid regarding the main storyline of the whole Bible.

Equipping Deacons: Special Seminars/Events

As they are able, the deacons will be encouraged to participate in a BILD International summit or training event. The summit features the rare opportunity to network with a truly broad spectrum of international church leaders only two and one half hours away from where we live. This event occurs each year in the fall (unfortunately for farmers), but it offers a perspective on God’s work in the world that is a treasure.

²⁹ Timothy Keller, *Resources for Deacons* (Decatur: Presbyterian Church of America, 1985).

³⁰ Vaughan Roberts, *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

Equipping Elders

While the elders are certainly not the only crucial leadership team in the church, they are the foundational leadership team upon which all other leadership teams will be built. If this foundation is weak, the entire structure will not be stable. It is instructive that when Paul and Barnabas returned to the newly planted churches of their first missionary journey, they not only “...strengthened the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith...”, they also “...appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting...” (Acts 14:22,23). How then can a SRI Bible church equip elders to believe, practice, and serve as God intended? These three aspects of assessment will be kept in view as each training forum is addressed.

As was stated in the section on training all disciples, potential leaders surface through basic or foundational training. Emerging leaders will be recognized as faithful men who have been equipped by the means outlined in that section.

Equipping Elders: Main Meeting of the Church

When we think of equipping, we must not forget the obvious. The regular church meetings are not a waste of time, something to get out of the way so we can get to the real task of equipping leaders. The meeting of the church must be seen as a major part of the equipping process. Otherwise, there is something extremely wrong with our meetings.

The Sermon. Each elder will be encouraged to note the main idea and one possible application of that week’s sermon. After the church meeting, he will prayerfully seek to share those with one other man in the church before he leaves for home. This will model

the kind of listening and applicational thinking that ought to be occurring in everyone during the church meeting. If it does not seem appropriate to do this in any conversation following the meeting, the elder might prayerfully attempt to make contact with another man during the week and briefly discuss the main idea and application with that man. Through this activity, the elder might serve as an “...example to the flock ...” (1 Pet 5:3) by actively listening carefully to the teaching and seeking to apply what is learned that week.

Pastor/Teacher Teaching Style. The pastor/teacher should model a reproducible Bible study and Bible teaching methodology in the church’s meeting. This does not mean that the pastor/teacher will refrain from the use of original languages in his study, but that he will demonstrate that understanding the main idea (author’s intent) of the passage is completely achievable through a careful study of the English text. The pastor/teacher does a great disservice to the body if he leaves the impression that only those with formal theological education can understand what God has said. The preacher will also refrain from any form of so-called “eloquence” that leaves the impression that teaching in the main meeting of the church is only for the “formally trained” teacher.

The elders should be encouraged to exercise their teaching responsibility (“able to teach” in 1 Tim 3:2) in a wide variety of settings, including the main meeting of the church. In this writer’s opinion, seminaries have worked hard on preparing their graduates to do the teaching, but not so hard on preparing them to train others to teach. Good, solid modeling will help encourage rather than discourage other elders to teach.

Elders and Teaching. The pastor/teacher should offer opportunities for other elders to both prepare and teach the Scriptures during the main meeting of the church. This might be a whole sermon, several shorter teachings, one main point of a sermon, simply sharing what he learned in his private study, and/or the biblical instruction prior to communion. At least some of these teaching opportunities should be in a setting where the pastor/teacher can observe the teaching and be involved in the assessment process. In other words, this is not just in-house pulpit supply. While assessment can be done with sound and/or video recordings, that is not as effective as witnessing the actual event.

Elders and Singing. The elders should come to the meeting of the church with the word of Christ dwelling in them richly so that they can participate with a heart that pleases God: "...with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16). Like any other member of the body, an elder is to practice singing with thankfulness in his heart to God. So for assessment, the elder is to obey that command like any other member of the body.

Elders and the Lord's Supper. In most independent churches, there is no church tradition that demands that the pastor must lead the Lord's supper. CBC has a history of rotating the responsibility of leading the Lord's Supper amongst all the elders. This practice helps the body visualize that the church is not lead by a single professional but by a team of leaders who share in the ministry of teaching and overseeing the church. Having all the elders participate in leading communion communicates that this is a family

of families gathering to enjoy a meal and remember our Lord instead of a religious ceremony lead by a cleric.

Equipping Elders: Sunday School/Small Groups

Sunday school and small groups are being viewed together since as explained earlier, adult Sunday School is actually being reshaped into small groups lead by elders as are the small groups meeting in homes during the week.

Elders Leading Small Groups. It should be our goal that each elder lead or share in leading a small group/Sunday school group. This offers each elder a smaller group of people to shepherd (offer spiritual care). Each elder will a group in a time of sharing, prayer, and discussion study of the Word of God. The groups will provide a launch pad for further contact during the week and for more specific prayer (private and group) for those under his care. As when Moses appointed elders in the wilderness, elders will have the option of taking hard cases to the other elders for help if special problems surface (marriage problems, crisis, etc.). For elders to shepherd God's church (Acts 20:28), they must teach (Titus 1:9), model (1 Pet 5:3), keep watch over souls (Heb 13:17), and pray (Eph 6:18). Small groups offer a means for every elder to serve some of the people as a shepherd in these specific areas.

Elder Choosing a Small Group Helper. Just as Paul chose Timothy to be with him, each elder should prayerfully choose (perhaps with consultation from the other elders) at least one man in his group to help him lead. This man should be teachable and faithful.

He may or may not end up as a leader. He would help the elder lead the sharing, prayer, and/or discussion times of the group.

Part of an elder's service to the church is to be looking for faithful men who are ready to be entrusted with the teaching that they may teach others also (2 Tim 2:2).

Small groups offer a more informal setting where potential leaders may surface. The large group meeting of the whole church offers fewer active ways for faithful men to serve.

Elders and Small Group Preparation. Each elder should carefully prepare for the meetings of the group. His preparation in the word will not only aid his own edification, it will model what is expected of the group. While there will always be the occasional week where "the wheels fall off", that should always be the exception, not the rule. A real-to-life leader makes preparation a priority to lead the whole group to function that way. The content of the group will be determined by the elders as a team unless they determine otherwise.

Elders and Speaking the Truth in Love. The elder in charge must speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15). He must be appropriately transparent about his life. This means no show of perfectionism and no "brutal" honesty (brutal meaning crude or coarse). If the body is to learn what speaking the truth in love looks like, they must see it from their leaders, continually and at close range. A small group is the place where this can happen more naturally.

Elders and Small Group Study Content. A seven year cycle of curriculum has been planned as recorded in the section on all disciples (also see chart in Appendix K). Preparing and participating in the discussions will bring spiritual growth to the elder as well as the group members. He will benefit from the interactive ministry of his own group. This will provide a common experience, content, vocabulary, belief, and practice that draws the church together in unity.

Equipping Elders: Mentoring

Pastor/Teacher and Elder Monthly/Quarterly Visit. Once a month/quarter, the pastor/teacher and each elder will schedule a time for interaction and prayer. During this time, they can discuss any areas of belief, practice, or service of concern to either man. Applications from recent sermons, small group discussions, or personal reading might be shared. A personalized plan for strengthening could be enacted to address any areas of need. More frequent meetings could be set if needed. The elder can discuss progress and/or concerns regarding the man he is mentoring. The pastor/teacher can relate and model aspects of mentoring that he is learning. Two helpful resources for building mentoring relationships are *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* by Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton³¹ and chapter 6 "Mentoring: A Personal Learning Process" in *The Leadership Baton: An Intentional Strategy for*

³¹ Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992).

Developing Leaders in Your Church by Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones, and Bruce Miller³²
(see Literature Review, chapter 3 of this paper).

Three goals stand out for these visits. First, these meetings provide personal interaction for both men to address aspects of their lives and ministries with a level of accountability that cannot happen in the elder meetings. Second, these relationships will serve as training and practice as each elder contemplates building a similar relationship with another faithful man in the body, most probably in his small group. Third, the pastor/teacher and the elder can each review their work regarding giftedness and help each other assess how well they are applying their gifts in service in the body and in the progress of the gospel.

Elder and Faithful Man Monthly Visit. Once a month, each elder will schedule a time for interaction and prayer with at least one "faithful man" (2 Tim 2:2) from his small group. The same suggestions mentioned above in the pastor/teacher and elder visit can be applied here. In addition, the two men can share the burden of how the small group meetings are going and pray for group members. The goal is to discern at least one man in the small group who shows signs of desire to pursue Christ and a teachable spirit. The elder will want to encourage this man toward greater participation by giving him opportunities to lead some aspects of the group meeting.

This hands-on training in ministry follows the model of Paul with Timothy and what Paul passed on to Timothy (2 Tim 2:2). As each elder begins involving this faithful

³² Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones, and Bruce Miller, *The Leadership Baton: An Intentional Strategy for Developing Leaders in Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

man in each aspect of the small group meeting, Carl George suggests a memorable and helpful sequence for mentoring:

I do, you watch, we talk.
I do, you help, we talk.
You do, I help, we talk.
You do, I watch, we talk.
We each begin to train someone else.³³

Once again, the goal of equipping is toward a work of service (Eph 4). The small group plus a mentoring relationship with the elder in charge offers a setting where a faithful man might be equipped for ministry.

Equipping Elders: Special Courses

Elders must not only think about maintenance of the church body, they must understand the mission of the church. This differs from merely participating in “missions” through monetary and/or prayer support. This has to do with grasping the purpose of every local church. Every facet of church life is driven by something bigger than itself. The healthy church is headed somewhere. It is not just trying to be healthy for its own sake. To insure that the elders grasp the mission of the church and how our local assembly fits into Christ’s mission, the elders should complete the following three year cycle of special courses.

During year one, the elders would study Jeff Reed’s course on Acts. This course drives the learners to wrestle with the mission of the local church and how it relates to the progress of the gospel by bringing the book of Acts out of the “mere history” section and into the catechetical section of our thinking about Scripture. The second year would be invested in the Pauline Epistles. This course invites the learner to discover how to

³³ Carl George, *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership* (Manchester, PA.: Kingdom, 1997), 61.

establish a church in maturity and set it on a road to stability in both teaching and practice. During the third year of the cycle, the elders would study the course *Leaders and the Early Church*. In this study, the local church leaders see a larger picture of the church in mission and grasp how the local leaders relate to the leaders who proclaim the gospel and plant churches. These three courses will help the elders to unify around the mission of the church and be able to communicate that mission in teaching and conversations.

These special courses will start in January and end in April to avoid holidays and the growing season of rural, northern America. Since the rural local school observes Wednesday night as church night, that night offers the best opportunity to offer special classes.

Some elders might be intimidated by the size of the course notebooks, the number of pages to read, and the number and length of the projects to produce. The BILD courses offer both a basic and advanced versions which partially address the problem. Further adjustments might include assigning only the Scripture passages and discussion questions, adding a few selected readings, doing all the readings but no written assignments, or completing all assignments as listed. These adjustments may be necessary because these materials were developed in a university city where people with college degrees are plentiful. Such is not the case in a SRI church setting.

Equipping Elders: Regular Elders' Meetings

Elders and Prayer. Prayer is to be a major part of the ministry of elders. But all too easily it gets set aside for other seemingly more important things. The elders must pray

for their families, for their own growth in maturity, for the members of the church body, and for the mission of the church.

Elders must pray for their own families. Once per quarter, during the prayer portion of the meeting, a passage on marriage or family should be read and prayed through for each of the elders' marriage and/or family. This time will not be a time for teaching or counsel, but a method to bring up one aspect of marriage or family and pray for each elder in that area. The qualification passages make it abundantly clear that the elder's family is his first ministry and that it is there where he learns to lead the church family.

Elders must pray for their own continued growth in the moral qualifications to serve as elder. Once per quarter, during the prayer portion of the elders' meetings, a qualification list will be read from Scripture with comments from the elder assessment tool (see Appendix F). Each elder should be prayed for regarding those qualities of life that should characterize him. The elders are not perfect men. The life they are to lead should be constantly put before them with prayer so that each would make progress.

Elders must pray for the members of church body. During the prayer portion of the elders' meetings, the elders will each pray for one family in each small group on a rotating basis. These prayers will include any families associated with the church who are not participating in small groups at the present. The elder in charge of the prayer time will have a prayer theme (one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, application from teaching passage, etc.) to help the prayers be specific about biblical issues and not "same old stuff" requests.

The early leaders of the church in Jerusalem appointed servants to serve tables so that they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Too often, elders get caught up in agenda items instead of these two biblical priorities. Therefore, a prayer notebook record will be kept of the families and when they were prayed for and for what. It would be encouraging if a brief note were dropped in the mail to each family prayed for each week with an encouragement to share prayer needs with the elders regularly by prayer box, phone, email, or letter.

Elders must pray for the mission of the church. We are not left on earth for self-development. We are left here with a mission. If we do not humble ourselves before our almighty God, we will certainly get distracted from His mission for us. Paul prayed for the churches he planted, but he also begged that they would pray for him.

Elders: Small Group Assessment. A brief time of assessing the small group meetings of the previous week with any encouragement/challenge for the next week's meetings should be an expected part of each elder meeting. If the elders are to make progress toward equipping the members of the body, they must take time to reflect on these small group learning events so as to maximize the impact of their time together. How can the groups better teach and admonish one another? How can they better bear one another's burdens? How can we better learn to pray for one another? How can each elder shepherd his small group in the ways of Christ? Difficulties should be discussed briefly. If there are serious problems, perhaps the elder in charge and the pastor/teacher could meet later to discuss and pray over those issues. If more help is needed, the entire elder

team may have to address the issue(s). A brief time of prayer could conclude the discussion segment regarding small groups.

Elder Meeting Equipping Segment.

To minimize numbers of meetings, the elders will use a portion of their regular meeting time to be better equipped for service. This will only occur during the time of year when they are not taking special courses on Wednesday nights. So during regularly scheduled meetings from May through December, the elders will work through a three year cycle of study and discussion material. During the first year, the elders will study and discuss *Teaching the First Principles*.³⁴ This will equip and aid the elders as they lead the small groups in these studies and discussions. During the second year, the elders will study the BILD course *The Character of a Leader*. This aims directly at character issues within the different types of leaders in the church. In this paper, the word practice is used for this concept. The third year of the cycle at elder meetings offer the elders the chance to review the doctrinal statement, the Old and New Testament Walk Through course, and the storyline of the entire Bible using Roberts' *God's Big Picture*. These reviews will help the elders to remain sharp theologically both in systematic and biblical theology.

Equipping Elders: Special Seminars/Events

As they are able, the deacons will be encouraged to participate in a BILD International summit or training event. The summit features the rare opportunity to network with a truly broad spectrum of international church leaders only two and one half

³⁴ Jeff Reed, *Teaching the First Principles* (Ames: LearnCorp Resources, 2003).

hours away from where we live. This event occurs each year in the fall (unfortunately for farmers), but it offers a perspective on God's work in the world that is a treasure. Elders would benefit greatly from participating in this event or in some of the other training events.

Equipping Ministers of the Gospel

The greater the responsibility one bears for teaching and equipping others, the greater is the need for care in their equipping and training. Therefore, those who demonstrated giftedness and desire to serve Christ's church as pastor/teachers, missionary/church planters, or evangelists should anticipate the same kind of careful oversight and training that Paul gave Timothy and Titus.

The BILD International Leadership Series has offered a complete but flexible curriculum for pastor/teachers who would like to take Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 seriously. Paul exhorts, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." The distinctive of this series is that it is church-based:

Church-based ... is theological education based in the life of churches, not schools housed in church buildings. All of the programs are designed and taught in churches, by churches, and for churches. Leaders of churches, church networks, and church-planting movements do all of the training in the context of their ministries.³⁵

All of the training forum applications to elders also will apply to those training to be ministers of the gospel. There are a few additional applications in a few of the training forums.

³⁵ *Handbook: Antioch School of Church Planting and Leadership Development*, October 2007.

Equipping Ministers of the Gospel: Mentoring

Here is where the strength of church-based theological education ought to shine. Assuming that the pastor/teacher is a good student of the word and an adequate teacher, regular discussions about the sermon passage should be a weekly event. Every week, the apprentice should be studying the same passage to be taught. Some weeks the discussion could during the week prior to the passage being taught. The two men could interact about how they understand the passage in context and how they would teach it with appropriate application. Some weeks, the discussion could happen after the passage has been taught and the discussion would be reflective about things the pastor/teacher might change or how the apprentice might have approached the passage. Then some weeks, the apprentice should be the one doing the teaching and the pastor/teacher could have discussions with him either before, after, or both. This is the kind of mentoring that simply cannot happen in an institutional school setting but can in a church-based setting.

Equipping Ministers of the Gospel: Special Courses

Once the first three year cycle of special courses is complete, the developing minister of the gospel would enter a second cycle of courses. Year four would focus on *Interpreting the Word I*. The course explores in greater depth discovering the author's intent in a book or passage. Year five would feature *Essentials of Sound Doctrine*. This study builds upon earlier biblical theology. Year six introduces the learner to *Preaching and Teaching*. It is time for the learner to become the teacher. Part of the course work is to actually do some preaching and teaching with evaluation.

BILD International's Jeff Reed has produced at least twenty five courses for leadership training. There are numerous other books, recordings, and readings that are available. The training could go on for a life-time. And it should and will. The beauty is that this is training in service, so the apprentice may minister alongside those who are equipping him for service.

In the small, rural setting, it has already been observed that multiple paid staff pastors in one church are rare if not non-existent. This reality is normally viewed as a major hurdle for a small, rural church pastor to take on the task of equipping a minister of the gospel. The answer may well be local networking. For example, within twenty miles of each other, there are two other pastors who are seriously exploring church-based theological education with BILD International. We are like-minded pastors in three different local churches (Bible Church, Baptist Church, Evangelical Free Church). While there are certainly important details to work through, the real possibility exists that we could share in the training of a minister of the gospel together. For instance, if the apprentice has the time and ability to take several courses at the same time but one pastor cannot handle multiple leadership courses, the multiple pastors could offer the multiple courses. The apprentice could serve as pulpit supply to the three churches, he would be exposed to multiple approaches to doing church, and get more opportunities to teach the word with evaluation than one small church could offer. There would be an obvious need for him to clearly state and maintain a commitment to remain under the authority of one church and its leaders for a specified period of time to avoid possible complications of diverted loyalties. But this approach addressed one of the greatest challenges that a SRI church faces in equipping a leader toward possible vocational ministry.

Equipping Ministers of the Gospel: Focused Ministry Team

The transition from learner to teacher must be encouraged with multiple opportunities to teach with assessment. This man should begin leading a small group, doing an increasing amount of preaching, and perhaps team teaching in the special course forum.

Equipping Ministers of the Gospel: Special Seminars/Events

Participating in an event like the BILD International summit becomes even more important feature of this man's development. Exposure to a wider network than a SRI church will literally open the world to this man. Through this event, he may have the opportunity to participate in ministry in another setting and explore how his gifts might be best used in the progress of the gospel.

Having worked through the assessment and training processes, this chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of how the two are linked together. The goal after all is to have the training actually address issues raised in the assessment process.

Links Between Training Process and Assessment

The assessment tools for each people grouping in the church body (all disciples, teachers, older men, older women, deacons, elders, and ministers of the gospel) contain aspects of beliefs, practice, and service (see Appendix). Those tools need to be used faithfully on an annual basis to surface areas of progress and areas that need to be addressed. This section will demonstrate how all three aspects are addressed by the training process for each grouping of people. Some aspects of the training process will be

commonly shared by all the groups while other aspects will be unique to one or perhaps several groups. To minimize repetition, the shared aspects will be dealt with first followed by aspects of training unique to specific groups. These links to assessment are in a chart format in Appendix K.

Aspects Shared by All Groups

All maturing Christians are to grow in grace and in knowledge (2 Pet 3:18). Paul speaks of every member of the body coming to a mature knowledge of the faith (Eph 4:13). Therefore, all disciples including teachers, older men, older women, deacons, elders, and ministers of the gospel will share the same foundational courses. We will seek unity in **belief** using both systematic theology and biblical theology. The church's doctrinal statement with a few references to Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*³⁶ will lay out a basic systematic theology that is believed and taught in this church. Vaughn Roberts' *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-line of the Bible*³⁷ coupled with an Old and New Testament "Walk Through the Bible" will enable all disciples to grasp a biblical theology of the whole unified story of the Bible.

Moving from beliefs to **practice**, the basic BILD course *The First Principles* will lay a solid foundation of biblical theology as applied to individual disciples, families, and the church as a family of families. Other training courses on crucial issues of our practice in the Christian life and life of the church will be offered either through the small groups

³⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction of Biblical Doctrine* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994).

³⁷ Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

or special courses. These courses are noted earlier in the training process and on the summary chart in Appendix K. Progress and areas of concern will surface with the faithful use of the annual assessment tool for all disciples (see Appendix A).

With regard to **service**, all disciples will discuss the biblical conflict resolution principles contained in Ken Sande's book *The Peacemaker*³⁸. All churches suffer under the burden of unresolved conflict. This tool will equip the body to guard itself from division. In addition to this, the groups will discuss in small groups the concepts and process of discovering giftedness using Arthur Miller's book *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be*³⁹. The ultimate goal is to have every disciple become a part of a ministry team that is based on their gifts and abilities through which they can serve Christ, the church, and the community. These service teams will include evangelism/church planting, worship, hospitality, mentor/counsel, teaching, deacons, and elders. The teams will normally be lead by an elder or a deacon.

Aspects Unique to Specific Groups

Having discussed training aspects shared by all the groups, this section will now look at training aspects that are unique to one or several groups of leaders being trained.

Teachers

The training process for teachers must continue to address all three aspects of assessment (beliefs, practice, and service). To deepen the aspect of **belief and practice**,

³⁸ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991).

³⁹ Arthur Miller, *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999).

those who show giftedness and desire to teach will be encouraged to complete series II and III of the First Principles in their small group settings, thus gaining greater skill in understanding the biblical author's intent for a book and passage. Their small group learning will also help deepen their biblical theology utilizing the Roberts' book *God's Big Picture*. They will also certainly be welcome to join in the BILD leadership series courses. To equip them for **service**, they will join in with an experienced teacher (Sunday school, Youth Group, etc.) so that they can observe, ask questions, help, and teach small portions with feedback in this setting. The two Saturday training meetings per year discussing a chapter in the Hendricks book should also encourage a more informed and experienced service for Christ in their teaching.

Older men and Older Women

The training process for older men and older women must deepen all three aspects of assessment (beliefs, practice, and service). To deepen the aspect of **belief and practice**, older men and women will be encouraged to complete series II and III of the First Principles in their small group settings. Through these studies, they will gain greater understanding regarding the Christian family and greater skill in understanding the biblical author's intent for a book and passage. Their small group study will delve into biblical theology utilizing the Roberts' book *God's Big Picture*. They will of course be welcome to participate in the BILD leadership courses. To sharpen their **service** in mentoring younger men and women, the pastor/teacher will conduct one equipping session per year that develops skills in mentoring. And finally, all the men and women of the church will participate in separate annual seminars or retreats on biblical manhood

and biblical womanhood building on the foundation of John Piper's description in his seminal first chapter of the book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*⁴⁰. These events will annually encourage the formation of mentoring relationships between the older/younger men and the older/younger women. They will also highlight one aspect of biblical manhood and womanhood as the teaching and discussion focus of the event.

Deacons and Elders

The training process for deacons and elders must continue to deepen all three aspects of assessment (beliefs, practice, and service). Over a three year cycle, deacons and elders will invest time in special courses and a portion of their regularly scheduled meetings to study and discuss a total of six courses. To deepen their **beliefs**, they will again discuss the church's doctrinal statement with references to Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. Vaughan Roberts's *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-line of the Bible* will be reviewed along with our "Walk Through the Bible" to enable the deacons and elders to sharpen their grasp of a biblical theology of the whole Bible. To deepen **beliefs, practice, and service**, each deacon and elder will participate in the BILD leadership courses *Acts* and *The Pauline Epistles*. Both groups will also complete the course *Leaders and the Early Church* to understand how each ministry team fits in with the mission of the church so as to better serve the body. The **practice** of both groups is addressed primarily by the BILD leadership course *Character of a Leader*. With regard to their **service**, each deacon and elder will work through the giftedness assessment

⁴⁰ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, ed., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991).

approach of Arthur Miller's book *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be* both with their small group and in the mentoring discussions with the pastor/teacher.

To sharpen their unique **service** to Christ in the church, the deacons will discuss with regular interaction with the elders the very practical suggestions in Tim Keller's book *Resources for Deacons*⁴¹ during the training time of their regular meetings for one year. The focused ministry of deacons will be refined by their study of Keller's book as they develop the aspects of mercy, stewardship, property, and helps. Details of this plan can be viewed in the summary chart in Appendix K.

The elders will sharpen their unique **service** to the body of Christ by working through the BILD course *Teaching the First Principles* for one year during the training time of their regular meetings. To deepen beliefs and service, during the second three year cycle of special courses, those elders who so desire will be encouraged to take *Interpretation I, Essentials of Sound Doctrine, and Preaching and Teaching*. The elders will **serve** as leaders of the small groups with assessment occurring regularly at elder meetings. They will **serve** the body by emphasizing prayer for the families of the church, the mission of the church, the elder/deacon teams, and the evangelistic and missions outreach of the gospel. Any elder who is available will be encouraged to participate in the BILD International annual summit in Ames, IA for further training in service and to network with other churches and movements of churches.

Minister of the Gospel

The training and assessment of the minister of the gospel will parallel that of elders in many respects. He might choose to use the advanced versions of the BILD

⁴¹ Timothy Keller, *Resources of Deacons* (Decatur: Presbyterian Church of America, 1985).

courses to increase the depth of his reading and writing. He will be given opportunities to teach in the main meetings of the church with formal and informal assessment. The interaction with the pastor/teacher regarding the sermon text will be the formal assessment. When the apprentice teaches, he will receive the informal assessment from the elderly who will tell him if he spoke loud enough, from the faces of his listeners that will tell him if they understood with appreciation, and from the honest, supportive feedback from the elders. He will also be equipped to share the teaching load of *The First Principles* and the special courses for training others. He should seriously consider participating in the BILD summit to expand his broaden his training and for exposure to church and mission leaders from around the world.

Just as the assessment tools will be evaluated for clarity and effectiveness, so too the elders will evaluate our training forums and programs to insure that we are adequately addressing the aspects of beliefs, practice, and service necessary to the maturity and usefulness of all disciples and leaders.

Summary

This thesis first observed the need and then established a theological foundation for training church-based leaders in SRI churches. Now a project to equip such leaders has been launched. It started with assessment and ended with a training process. Chapter five will step back and analyze what has been accomplished, where this project should go from here, and how it might be helpful to other SRI churches.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS: WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED

Chapter one stated the need for equipping leaders in the SRI church. Chapter two laid down a foundational theology regarding the church and her leaders with eight applicational issues faced in this setting. Chapter three offered a review of literature that relates to the issue of equipping leaders in a SRI church. Chapter four launched a church-based equipping program for leaders in such churches. This sets the stage to ask what has been achieved by this thesis-project.

This chapter seeks to state through reflection and analysis what has been accomplished. It will begin with some strategic structural decisions that have already been put into place. Second, I will outline some of the next steps I desire to implement in the attempt to intentionally equip leaders in this small, rural independent church setting. Lastly, I will reflect on the significance of this thesis, not only in this specific setting, but on the possible significance it might have for other SRI churches.

Strategic Structural Discussions and Decisions

Pastor/teacher Transformation (Discussion)

Like many other pastors, I was discipled in a traditional, evangelical church and trained for ministry in a Christian college and seminary. Much of my philosophy of ministry was shaped by these experiences. In spite of much youthful skepticism, my default mode of ministry was established. Certain programs and activities are viewed as essential to church ministry.

However, repeated reflection on Paul's succinct description of ministry in the church with Christ as the head and each member of the body performing its work challenges the current paradigm of one speaker with many passive listeners. While I treasure teaching and preaching the word of God in the meetings of the church, how might we approximate the interactive teaching we witness in the New Testament? If we are to decentralize the teaching ministry of the church to include a vibrant small group ministry, we must have trained leaders. To sustain this paradigm, we must purposely train and equip those leaders.

The independent church movement has to a degree dismantled the traditional "pastor" paradigm. This is reflected in the change of title to "pastor/teacher" instead of simple "pastor". Now the church must accomplish the task of reconstructing the pastor/teacher role to a seriously ordered approach of equipping the saints that would include developing leaders in the local church setting. This goes far beyond a mere ability to exegete and teach Ephesians 4. Pastors and elders must learn to lead.

Elders and the Mission of the Church (Decision Enacted)

We have learned that the elders must take responsibility for understanding and communicating the mission of instead of delegating that to others. After appointing and then ultimately disbanding a missions committee, the elders now see that a local church's missions approach must grow out of the vision and mission of that local church as understood by the leaders of the church. "Missions" is not a disconnected entity that the church merely funds. It is part and parcel of the leaders' understanding of how the church participates in the outreach of both the gospel and the New Testament teaching

about the church. Christ's commission goes beyond proclaiming the gospel. It includes planting and establishing churches that will perpetuate the process of equipping the saints, training leaders, and planting more churches. In our setting, delegating this to a committee placed the elders in a reactive rather than a directing role in the mission of our church. Without sufficient one-mindedness on the mission of the church, this ultimately did not work well.

Reintroduce Elder Led Small Groups (Decision Enacted)

An essential part of training leaders in a more biblical fashion is training them “in service” rather than “for service”. No one argues against the observed fact that we all learn better when we are in circumstances where we must immediately apply what we learn. Elders or prospective elders who are merely learning about the word and learning about ministry with no avenue for actually teaching the word or ministering to people can get stuck in theoretical mode. Elders who have the responsibility of a small group are more intentional and engaged in real ministry.

From the perspective of the members of the church body, small groups offer aspects of ministry that a large group meeting cannot address. The early church meeting in homes could perform the many “one another” tasks commanded in Scripture that have been lost in the modern church. Reestablishing small groups then offers a better training setting for elders and a fuller ministry within the body.

Reshape Adult Sunday School into Small Groups (Decision Enacted)

Since our church members are so spread out geographically and consistent evening meeting times have proved difficult to schedule, started an experiment of adding extra time to our Sunday school time and then transforming adult Sunday school into small groups. The groups meet on site for sixty to seventy minutes, are led by elders, are static in membership, and seek to include prayer and sharing as well as study of Scripture.

Based on consistent attendance, preparation, and participation, these groups are working well as of this writing. This approach has served as a realistic way to offer small groups without adding another night out to the week. We obviously have to live with the limitations of meeting in a church building instead of a home and of a definite dismissal time to move to our church meeting. But it is certainly better than having no small groups at all.

Assessing Small Group at Elder Meetings (Decision Enacted)

Past experience has taught us that anything you do with people will have problems. So rather than just restarting small groups and moving on to the next thing, we are seeking to include small groups as a regular agenda item for our elder meetings. This way, problems can be surfaced and addressed. We can pray for one another and advise one another. These discussions also enable the pastor/teacher to observe if there are other aspects of elder training that might be addressed at future meetings.

Maintain Cohesion: Sharing and Corporate Prayer (Decision Enacted)

Bible churches and perhaps many evangelical churches seem to reduce the work of the Lord to teaching. The apostles devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6). The early church certainly devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, but they equally devoted themselves to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. We as a church need to learn a corporate dependence upon God that also maintains our cohesion as a whole church. While private prayer must always be the foundation of the prayer life of a church, corporate prayer must be an important component of the main meeting of the church. Taking time to allow people to talk about their lives and their need for prayer contributes to a sense of oneness in the whole church body. This sense of oneness is extremely important to small, rural churches and every other attempt to introduce small groups has been viewed as a threat to it.

Maintain Cohesion: Reconfiguring the Lord's Supper (Decision Enacted)

Making "communion" part of a Lord's Supper meal (CBC calls it Family Fellowship) has helped transform this event from a mere ritual into a more informal family event. Rather than feeling like we were merely making a meeting longer, we now cancel Sunday School/small groups on the first Sunday of the month, start our church meeting early, participate in music and teaching, have an extended time of sharing and community prayer, and then celebrate and remember the Lord's death around tables before our meal together. This certainly puts the elders more at ease in leading this time and helps members of the body talk to each other more openly.

Our Need to be Ready to Church Plant (Discussion)

An unexpected potential opportunity arose through a mentoring ministry of one of our elders. This elder mentors young men getting out of a facility that serves as a halfway house for those getting out of prison. A young man he was mentoring began working in a town about thirty miles away. There was no evangelical witness in that town so when he moved there upon release from the facility, he asked if we might consider starting a Bible Study there and then consider starting a church. Although the young man eventually backed out, we had to think very seriously about our readiness as a church to extend ourselves into a ministry like that. We had an evangelistic study ready and two elders and their wives had committed themselves to make the weekly Saturday evening trip for the study. While we were disappointed that the opportunity fell through, it did force us to assess our readiness for such a ministry. Was our leadership team deep enough to extend ourselves like that? What must we do to be ready? Equip the saints and train leaders.

Choosing and Activating One Evangelistic Tool (Decision Enacted)

While our church has studied various motivational and methodological books about evangelism, we had not looked for a tool or approach that we thought fit our situation and philosophy of ministry. We had also not intentionally trained any to carry on a consistent evangelistic ministry using that tool. After research, we chose *Christianity Explained*¹ by Michael Bennett as a clear method to present the gospel in home settings, one on one situations, and even preaching opportunities. The approach uses six sessions from the gospel of Mark to carefully proclaim the gospel. Everyone in

¹Michael Bennett, *Christianity Explained* (Queensland: Michael L.B. Bennett).

the group is encouraged to read the gospel of Mark during the six-week study and bring any insights or questions they have each week. The approach is interactive and presents key aspects of the gospel one idea at a time. While this will not be the only method we use, it offers us one approach through which we can begin training leaders to proclaim the gospel and would work well in most church planting situations.

Elder Meetings: Praying for Church Families (Decision Enacted)

The elders have certainly prayed for our church families, but we have tended to pray for crises and special requests. We decided to begin a more regular and systematic way of praying through the entire church family a few families per meeting. Each elder calls a family in his group and inform them that we will be praying for them at our upcoming meeting. He would gather any concerns/requests and share them at the elders' meeting.

Next Steps

Having discussed strategic structural decisions that have already occurred, this chapter will now proceed to look at what next steps need to be taken to advance the proposals of this thesis.

Elders: Centrality of Equipping Leaders

All the elders of the church must see and embrace the big picture of the centrality of equipping leaders for the health and reproductive viability of the church. The elders of the church have been very supportive of this project. We must now move toward full

implementation over a sustained period of time. Churches are prone to be reactionary based on perceived challenges and crises. Equipping leaders is rarely perceived as the primary need of a church. Like the foundation of a building, equipping leaders is not very exciting but absolutely essential. For this to become part of the DNA of the church, the pastor must invest the necessary time and effort to administrate and support the plan long term.

Leadership Training: Normal Part of Elders/Deacons Meetings

Part of casting the vision of leadership training in our church will be demonstrating that much of leadership training can be part and parcel of what we already do. While there will be times when an entire special class must be scheduled to teach and train present and emerging leaders, some training in the areas of beliefs, practice, and/or service can certainly be taught and discussed at our regular meetings. These “bite-sized” portions must remain related to the bigger whole and not become fragmented pieces that stand alone. It would seem appropriate that the pastor teacher could become a leader and an equipper of leaders by taking the time to train current elders and deacons as a facet of their regularly scheduled meetings.

Small Group Ordered Learning Plan

As we reintroduce the *First Principles* to our church, we are discussing the passages and issues in our small groups and then teaching the same passages and issues in our church meeting. The elders thought that this dual approach would enable the church to internalize these principles to a greater degree. While this is working fine for

this initial exposure, it cannot be sustained long term. We have already had a few new individuals and families come to church meetings during this series. We must first have a system to record who has studied, discussed, and understood the foundational teachings we consider part of our core curriculum. We must then have a method to invite newer people to join us in pursuing a mature knowledge of the gospel and teachings of Christ and His apostles. As they become willing to join, we must offer the same core curriculum on a regular and repeating basis.

Equipping Elders: Small Group Ordered Learning

While three of our five elders have had some training in teaching the *First Principles*, two have not. This is a critical time to maximize the impact of these studies and discussions by having the leaders as prepared and mentally sharp as possible. The leaders guide is available and all the elders are either leading or participating in a study at this time. This training is planned for our regularly scheduled elders' meetings.

Atmosphere: Encouragement to Lead

The heart attitudes of the present leaders probably do more than anything to set the atmosphere in a church. One of the next things to do is to encourage the current leaders by the truth of the Scriptures and the Headship of Jesus Christ. All churches have problems, but churches loyal to Christ and committed to the New Testament ideals of the church will seek to address and resolve their problems. This firm foundation creates and sustains an atmosphere that encourages present and future leaders. It gives people the

confidence that ultimately, the head of the church is no mere man or group of men. It is Christ Himself. Therefore, the outlook of the church is ultimately optimistic.

Another aspect of this atmosphere is that the New Testament presents participating in leading God's church as a good thing. Paul, for instance, states regarding elders or overseers that "...if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desire to do" (1 Tim 3:1). While it is certainly possible to desire church leadership due to wrong motives, it is certainly not presented in Scripture as something to avoid like the plague. This is Christ's church and He motivates and equips some to lead under His authority. To serve Christ by helping lead His church ought to be something regarded as a good thing, even though the Scriptures are honest enough to speak of the struggles and heartaches that accompany leadership.

Establish a Clear Pathway to Leadership

While the logistics sometimes seem insurmountable, we must work hard at these issues so that we can offer a clear pathway to leadership. If this remains unclear in our minds as leaders, how will it look to those outside looking in? In surveying the literature, it is easy to either fall into creating a few rhyming clichés on the one hand ("The Three A's of Church Leadership") or to create such a detailed monster that no one would ever attempt the challenge (The Thirty-Three Year Nightly Elder Training Course). We must learn with Christ and His apostles how to challenge and then lead potential leaders into leadership.

Training Process Must Match Learning Capacities

Rarely does one size really fit all. Just as the writer to the Hebrews discerned that he must give his readers milk not meat, so the wise man will ponder carefully how much meat he offers at one sitting, even to the mature. Some will relish reading three articles about a Scriptural topic while others would prefer to read the relevant passage of Scripture, ponder it, and start the discussion. Some potentially good leaders will only be able to write a few paragraphs on an assigned topic while others can produce volumes. We must take care not to set up a standard higher than Christ's when we think about equipping leaders for His church. As this training project is unleashed, we must be discerning about tempering the work load and learning methodology to match the time-limitations, reading capabilities, strength, and optimal learning methods of those learning. We may need to develop a "First Principles for Dummies" or "First Principles: Audio Version" for some.

Process Must Become Transferable

Several area pastors have already expressed interest in this project. They certainly recognize the need in their own churches for leaders equipped to serve Christ's church. While many of the ideas in this project are untried in our setting, they want to think through these ideas and processes together. While they may be willing to read all the pages of this thesis-project, others might not be so willing. Putting the ideas into transferable form would be much more beneficial. The first application of this is Appendix K which summarizes the entire project on one chart. That simplification must be the first of many steps to simplify the process so that it is easily transferred to others.

Ordered Learning and Youth Group Leaders

The youth leaders in our church have recognized the importance of the *First Principles* series. I am preaching through the passages and concepts as we discuss them in our small groups. As a result, the youth leaders asked if the youth could go through the principles at the same time. They are not at present requiring the youth to work through the concepts and passage on their own before group discussion. There would be an opportunity to work with the leaders as to how best we could introduce this ordered learning to our young people.

Long Range/Short Range Plan

This project forced me to produce a preliminary schedule for next year that included not only church times and dates, but also marked the same for small groups, mentoring training, special courses, seminars for biblical manhood and womanhood, and teacher training. One of the next steps is to get this into the hands of the elders so that we actually make leadership training a priority starting now in our schedules for next year.

Significance of this Thesis to Other SRI Churches

While some of the following thesis benefits will be functional for rural or city, small or large, and independent or denominational churches, this thesis seeks to primarily address equipping church-based leaders in SRI churches.

Reforming the SRI Church Pastor's Role

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by helping their pastors refocus their ideas about significance. Many pastors in small, rural church settings end up with an identity crisis. Today's society places great value on things not present in small, rural church settings. Society values youth but there are fewer and fewer youth here since both the number of farms and the size of towns are shrinking (see chapter 1, "Challenges of SRI Church"). Society values intellect but the intellectual centers of the world are in the universities located in more sizable population centers, not in small, rural towns (see chapter 1, "Challenges of SRI Churches"). Society values measurable numeric growth but rural evangelical churches seem to grow slowly if at all and shrink fast when problems erupt. Society values economic growth potential. But the American small town is dying. Economic depression shrinks the population both inside and outside the church.

But what if pastors refocused their ideas about success from how the world views success to how God views it. Rather than numbers, size, and worldly significance, what if rural (and city) pastors seriously fashioned their work after the models of Timothy and Titus? Instead of acting like the typical parson of western civilization, we would do what Paul commanded those two men. We would seek to set in order what remains (Titus 1). We would work within our church systems to appoint elders who meet the stated qualifications. We would watch for faithful men whom we could teach that would be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2). We would have an eye for the progress of the gospel and the expansion of the church. None of these pursuits are stymied by pastoring a SRI church.

Reforming the SRI Church Pastor's Elder Relationships

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by showing pastors that they must learn to both lead and follow. There are certainly times when the pastor must be point guard or quarter back and lead the team. But the pastor must also recognize the wisdom of the other elders. Some will be farmers who not only run a business, but have trained sons to take over the farming operation. Those who have done this well are more experienced in mentoring than all the pastors I know.

Both by personality and training, I tend toward the passive side of the spectrum. I have been cautious lest I violate Peter's warning against lording it over those allotted to my ("your") charge (1 Pet 5:3). But whether an elder or not, the pastor/teacher must pastor and teach. He must declare God's truth as he understands it and seek to apply all its parts. But he must be able to receive help in how the truth applies in a culture that the other elders may understand much better than he does. He must not be quarrelsome, but kind to all, able to teach (2 Tim 2:24). He must work hard at building a team that has the same goals and is willing to let the strengths of all members make the team as strong as it can be.

The Importance of Systems

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by revealing the importance of systems, even in small, rural churches. One of the strengths of the rural church is its informality. The rural church mirrors at least some of the early church's simplicity. There is perhaps less temptation to create a production or meet entertainment

expectations than in a city with numerous large churches. It has more the feel of a family than of a formal assembly.

But this informality can work against serious ordered learning and equipping leaders. Informality can lend itself to “letting things happen” as opposed to discovering and pursuing biblical goals. Since training leaders was part of the early church’s mission, rural churches and pastors will have to resist the norm of the comfortable and challenge themselves to fulfill all aspects of ministry delegated by Christ to His church. They will have to create systems or ways to do things and then assess their effectiveness.

On a personal note, I have never considered myself a long-range planner, so I normally do not do it. I suspect that you can get away with this better in a small, rural setting than in large, city settings. Perhaps there are other small, rural church pastors like me who have never had a plan to train leaders; therefore, it never gets scheduled so it never happens. Leadership training does not happen by teaching general principles as sermon applications. It happens by setting up a system with assessment and a plan.

The Significance of Integration

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by underscoring the significance of integration. Everything we do should fit into a larger whole on purpose. And nothing we do should be detrimental to that same larger whole. There must in other words be economy of effort in the body of Christ.

Take the sermon for an example. The sermon is not simply a tradition that we are stuck with forever no matter how out-dated it is. The pastor/teacher carefully prepares to teach from a section of Scripture. But how might it fit into the rest of the life of the

church? First, it could become a topic of conversation after the church meeting. As has been suggested in this project, everyone should grasp and write down the main idea and one application. Why not have this become the norm to talk about for a least part of our discretionary time after church meetings? Second, the main point and applications could become a topic of discussion during a meal-time at home. Third, as mentioned in the training program for ministers of the gospel, the pastor/teacher and the apprenticed minister of the gospel can both study the passage and have discussions before the sermon, after the sermon, or both. Periodically, it will be the apprentice who is doing the teaching but the discussions are already set in motion. Fourth, the elders at their weekly meeting can use the main point and application of the sermon as the topic about which to pray for the families of the church during the elders' meeting prayer time.

A second example of integration might be the book on giftedness planned in the small group studies for all disciples. That will be the first exposure to the ideas and application of Arthur Miller's system to discover how God made and gifted you. But that same material will be revisited as the pastor/teacher visits with the elders and deacons in their mentoring visits. The third way that material will be used is when older men and women meet with younger men and women for mentoring visits and interaction. Fourth, all disciples will be encouraged to become a part of a ministry team within the church. Their service in and through the church will be based upon their assessment of their giftedness. The same materials are integrated into the very fabric of all church life. The individual act is part of a larger whole.

Theological Education for Everyone

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by stressing the importance of theological education for everyone. Very few books in the New Testament were written primarily for church leaders (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon are the exceptions). Almost all were written to churches to be understood by common ordinary Christians. Over time, church teachers have reorganized the teachings of the New Testament into categories and called them theology. We then made it a special category of learning for experts and concluded that common Christians need not trouble themselves with this kind of knowledge.

Paul is clear that the equipping gifts are to equip all the saints for the work of ministry and that all the saints are to come to a mature knowledge of the Son of God and to the unity of the faith (Eph 4:11-16). It is clear that there is a theological knowledge foundation expected of all believers if they are to mature in Christ. This thesis-project offers a methodology and materials to help the SRI church accomplish this.

Reassessment of Assessment

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by establishing the need for assessment and then demonstrating a method for doing it. Assessment is a first principle of the New Testament. Whether in the belief sections or the practice sections of his letters, Paul was always assessing the progress of the believers and their leaders. They must conform to the beliefs and practices commanded by God. Paul continually exhorted the believers to carry on this ministry with one another. They were to teach and

admonish one another. If anyone strayed from the truth in belief or practice, the body was to work toward restoring them. All this is impossible without assessment.

The modern church has certainly kept records of things. We can tell how many attended church meetings and how much money was given or spent during any given year. We have become adept at measuring things that are easy to measure: people and money. It is much harder to assess if someone is making spiritual progress. While we are not pure pragmatists, we must also be learning whether what we are doing is actually helping equip disciples and leaders. This project offers a method to try, evaluate, and then adjust as needed. If other pastors are like me in this area, very little assessment ever happens.

New Purpose for Old Traditions

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by suggesting that once we clarify our purpose as a church, we may be able to infuse new purpose into an old tradition. Rural churches rarely change. We have the same people, same building, same community, and same programs. Traditions may be a bigger issue in the small, rural church than in the larger, city church. This thesis offers both goals and methods that may not dictate overthrowing a tradition. Traditions (sacred cows) are difficult things. The advice of this rural, small town pastor is, never kill a sacred cow unless you have to. For instance, board meetings can become a gathering of elder/shepherds who desire to pray for the sheep and be equipped to better serve them. Sunday school can become a time to train disciples and leaders. Youth group can become a time where an older man and woman mentor younger men and women toward greater godliness. Ladies' meetings can

become an equipping time for older and younger women. Potlucks can become love feasts tied to the Lord's Supper. Equipping leaders does not necessarily demand changing everything about how a small, rural church does things. It simply infuses a central purpose to everything else.

An Equipping Template: Beliefs, Practice, and Service

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by offering an equipping template. Recognizing that there are several aspects to developing leaders is not unique to this thesis. Malphurs and Mancini (*Building Leaders* – see Literature Review) target character, knowledge, skills, and emotions. Forman, Jones, and Miller (*The Leadership Baton* – see Literature Review) speak of head (knowledge/wisdom), heart (character), and hands (skills to serve others). Reed (*Leaders and the Early Church* – see Literature Review) uses the terms character development, ministry skills, and theological soundness. All of these terms highlight the need to go beyond merely training the mind with knowledge which is the tendency of formal education. This thesis offers both a method and materials to train toward these aspects of assessment.

Small, Rural Church Self-Concept

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by enabling rural pastors to stop focusing on the limitations of rural ministry and take hold of the advantages. As the literature review (section “rural”) demonstrates, this is by far the most common theme of the books written about rural church. While at times this sounds like “look on the bright side” advice, it is certainly time for rural pastors to stop measuring themselves by Willow

Creek Community Church or Bethlehem Baptist Church standards and refocus on what Christ thinks of the church, especially their own local church.

Large church pastors confess that they are pressed to become something akin to ranchers instead of shepherds. Sheer numbers force them to this role. So why should the small church pastors complain of too few sheep? Take the informality, flexibility, no-pretense life you have and equip leaders. Most likely, there is no radio or TV show to produce, nor is there a magazine article or a book to write. Why not invest yourself into the saint and equip them, especially leaders. Meet regularly with those who want to learn. Let's train some leaders and then let God take them where He wants!

A Vision for Women's Ministry

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by seeking to champion a vision for women in ministry. As is clear from the thesis, CBC interprets Scripture that addresses women's roles closely in line with the complementary view. But as mentioned in chapter two, in trying to distinguish itself from the culture, the church must take care lest it focuses only on what women should not do rather than equipping them to do what they should do. This thesis presents the intentional pursuit to equip and enlist women in ministries appropriate to their God-given design and gifts.

Toward a Vision of Biblical Elders

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by offering a vision of biblical elders. The independent Bible church movement did the church a great service by reviving a more biblical theology about local church leadership. God never intended one

man to rule the local church. But it has taken years for the independent church to sort out what elders should do and how are these men to be trained? This thesis offers not only a goal for elders, but a means to help them get there. Starting with assessment, a plan is laid out to equip elders for their work of service to the body of Christ.

Toward a Vision for Biblical Deacons

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by modeling the training of deacons as well as elders. The independent Bible church movement not only overthrew the traditional role of the pastor, it threw out the deacons. The Baptist paradigm featured one pastor with a board of deacons to help him. The independent Bible church movement championed the plurality of elders. This left the deacons out of work. This thesis offers an understanding of the role of deacons in a SRI church setting and a plan on how to help a team of men get there.

Equipping Leaders Begins with Equipping the Saints

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by offering a continuum understanding for equipping the saints for service. “Equipping” is an apt word to describe what leaders are to do (see chapter 1). It moves us beyond the mere transfer of knowledge into the entire template of beliefs, practice, and service. But even beyond that, it also captures what we are to do with current, potential, and emerging leaders. Equipping leaders is simply an extension of what we do with all disciples. It is part of a continuum of equipping disciples, only at a more advanced level. This explains why this

thesis did not start with equipping leaders but equipping all disciples. That is where leadership development starts whether in a large, city church or a small, rural church.

Missions Networking

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by opening the door for a small, rural independent church to network with likeminded leaders, churches, and church planting teams in the United States and around the world. In our case, our initial missions support tended to be driven by relatives of church members and past contacts of people in our church who had been involved in missions. Our missions involvement was being driven not by our understanding of Scripture and Christ's mission, but by people we knew or were related to. By becoming intentional regarding equipping leaders, we have also become more intentional about the leaders we send out as missionaries. Just what are their goals? Are they seeking to plant churches that will perpetuate what Christ set in motion with His apostles? The independent church can network with likeminded leaders to really participate in ministry that is church-based instead of being limited to what independent mission organizations offer.

BILD International has strategically gathered a network of church and church movement leaders from around the world who work together for the progress of the gospel and the planting and establishing of churches. I know of no other organization in the Midwest (or anywhere for that matter) that has this kind of network. Once a year, BILD conducts a summit in Ames, IA and many of these leaders gather for celebration and training. Needless to say, here is a goldmine for networking right on the front porch of rural America. As an example, CBC has partnered with an Indian church

planter/leadership trainer in India. Other area rural and city churches have also invited this gifted man to speak and may join in support of his ministry. While one rural church cannot completely support a missionary, a network of rural churches in one area could. This international minister of the gospel can then visit a number of churches in the same area in one trip with economy of effort. This thesis hopes to model and then spread this plan among other SRI churches.

A Rekindled Desire to Equip Leaders

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by rekindling the desire in other pastors to equip leaders. In the introduction to chapter one, I recounted the excitement I felt as I came home from seminary one day after hearing about William Tennent in a church history class. I shared with my wife about this Presbyterian pastor in Pennsylvania during the 1700's who trained ministers of the gospel as part of his ministry. He started what became known as the log college. I still remember how that idea resonated in my spirit as the ideal of how to train future leaders.

But desires and dreams do not fulfill themselves. Training leaders does not happen by accident. My involvement with BILD International and their offering a doctor of ministry degree with Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary has providentially brought me to the place to finally write and attempt to put into effect the idea of training leaders in rural churches. I long for others to see this desire rekindled in them also.

Networking with Area Local Churches to Train Leaders

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by encouraging likeminded rural pastors to network for encouragement and for training leaders. Some of the area evangelical pastors gather once a month for lunch, sharing, and prayer. While there is a sense of friendship and camaraderie, the aspect of networking together for the progress of the gospel could be expanded. Through my association with BILD International, I have experienced the challenge and encouragement of networking with likeminded pastors and mission leaders.

There are now three area pastors who are showing various levels of interest in the BILD network, philosophy, and materials. While we serve in different churches (Evangelical Free, Baptist, and Bible), we are one-minded regarding the gospel, the church, and the equipping of leaders. Is there not a possibility to network in training leaders? We are all in single staff pastor churches. If we cannot singlehandedly train a man for church ministry, could we do it together? If the man would have the time and energy to participate in more courses than one pastor could offer, could we cooperate in each offer him a course? The man could eventually serve a pulpit supply for all three (or more) churches as we train him together. Rural churches could network and form the equivalent of a multi-staff ministry setting. This would eliminate one of the main hurdles for training upper level leaders for ministry in a SRI church!

Needed: Church Leaders Who Extend and Establish

This thesis offers help to other SRI churches by promoting the need for two kinds of leaders in the church. The independent, Bible Church movement was largely a reaction

to dead denominationalism. The dangers of connectional church government were plain to see. As theological institutions and denominational leaders depart from biblical truth, they leave their churches in danger of heresy, compromise, or both.

But there were unintended consequences to the independent, Bible church movement. One consequence was the loss of networking among churches. But a second and perhaps more serious one was the loss of a method to identify and send out sodality leaders. Any outside encouragement or exhortation became an elective based on pastoral preference. Any missionary outreach was relegated to independent mission organizations not all of which were truly church-based in their mission philosophy and practice. Thirdly, because the Bible church movement was working so hard on figuring out plurality of elders and elder rule, we lost sight of local church involvement in identifying and training sodality leaders. Most if not all church-based, leadership training books from an independent church perspective such as those by Getz² and Strauch³ are obviously aimed at local (modality) leaders.

If we would follow the model of the church in Antioch, the ones sent out to expand the kingdom (sodality) were chosen from those who had been leading and teaching at the local level (modality leaders). Pastors of rural local churches must think globally, not merely locally. The pastors and the leaders they train should also explore the possibility of serving for the progress of the gospel, not merely in the one local church.

² Gene Getz, *Elders and Leaders*.

³ Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*.

A Last Thought: Leadership with Humility

Researching and writing this thesis has had a profound impact on me. Seminary taught me to teach. This thesis-project has challenged me to lead. As I reflect back, the controversies around the issues of application recorded in chapter two were opportunities to do theology in culture, but those times called for leadership to bring the leaders and congregation together in open discussion within the bounds of speaking the truth in love. The literature of chapter three confirmed the difference between teaching and leading. Many authors can produce great topical treatises on leadership full of good, biblical principles, but few offer a means of assessment with a plan to train with that assessment in mind. And now in chapter four, I have pushed through the very hard work of constructing an assessment process with a training plan with that assessment in mind. And now by the grace of God, I am ready to work out that plan. I have already done a year in advance calendar scheduling in the appropriate dates for next year's training events and forums.

This thesis has also made me realize that we must humble ourselves and pray. No amount of training alone will develop leaders for the churches. Several key texts that I have returned to repeatedly are Ephesians 4:11-16 and Colossians 1:28,29. Both texts emphasize the effort put forth by gifted men to equip others toward maturity in the body of Christ. But both passages occur in the context of prayer. Prior to the Ephesians 4 passage, Paul has twice recorded prayers he offered for the church at Ephesus (1:15ff and 3:15ff). By the time Paul speaks of all his labors to present every man complete in Christ in Colossians 1:28,29, he has already mentioned twice that he did not cease to pray for

the Colossian disciples (1:3,9-12). He prayed for the very things he worked so hard to produce.

Paul understood and practiced what he taught so clearly in 1 Corinthians 3:6,7 where he said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." We must understand and practice this as well. All our human efforts must be joined with the mighty power of God because God is the One who causes growth and ordains leaders for His church.

In seeking God's wisdom about equipping leaders in and for the SRI church, there is no desire to demonize the large, city, or denominational church. Wherever God calls people to Himself, churches must be planted and established. The SRI church must learn how to fully participate in what God is doing in the world. He is establishing His church. That church needs leaders. We must take up the charge given to all churches to equip all the saints, even those saints that God has gifted to lead in the planting and establishing of His church around the world.

APPENDIX A

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT FOR ALL DISCIPLES

Use the following assessment scale.

- 1 Nearing Maturity
- 2 Making Rapid Progress
- 3 Making Normal Progress
- 4 Making Slow Progress
- 5 Needing Help

This assessment has several segments. It is drawn from a statement in 2 Peter and the seven major propositions of the teaching sections of the epistles as summarized by C.H. Dodd (*Becoming a Disciple*, p. 33). It also offers assessment regarding the young men, the young women, employees (servants), and employers (masters). Respond only to segments that apply to you. It is to be used annually by everyone in the CBC church family.

I. Peter states that we are to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Pet 3:18).

- A. Are you growing in grace? In other words, are you living life in the light of the promises of the gospel, seeking to live for the Lord motivated by His great mercies instead of by guilt or fear of punishment?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

- B. Are you growing in knowledge (of the Lord through the reading and study of His word)?

1 2 3 4 5 Comments:

II. Seven major propositions of the teaching sections of the epistles (Dodd)

- A. The New Testament Christian is enjoined to reform his conduct, putting off your former manner of life and putting on your new self created after God's likeness. Are you doing so?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

B. The New Testament Christian is to make progress in living out a new set of virtues (fruit of the Spirit): Are you making progress in these aspects?

Comments

Love

1 2 3 4 5

Joy

1 2 3 4 5

Peace

1 2 3 4 5

Patience

1 2 3 4 5

Kindness

1 2 3 4 5

Goodness

1 2 3 4 5

Faithfulness

1 2 3 4 5

Gentleness

1 2 3 4 5

Self-Control

1 2 3 4 5

C. Proper Christian relationships with the family. Respond to all that apply.

Husbands: love wives and live with them in an understanding way

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

Wives: subject to and respect husbands

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

Children: honor/obey parents

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

Parents: train children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

D. Right relationships within the Christian Community: love one another

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

E. Conduct toward those outside the faith: wisdom, gracious speech, knowing how to answer

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

F. Correct relationships with authorities: be subject for the Lord's sake

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

G. The Call to watchfulness and responsibility: Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls... seeking to devour

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

III.	For Young Men	Comments			
A.	Sensible				
1	2	3	4	5	
B.	Example of good deeds in all things				
1	2	3	4	5	
C.	Purity in doctrine				
1	2	3	4	5	
D.	Dignified				
1	2	3	4	5	
E.	Sound in Speech which is beyond reproach				
1	2	3	4	5	
IV.	For Young Women	Comments:			
A.	Love their husbands				
1	2	3	4	5	
B.	Love their children				
1	2	3	4	5	
C.	Sensible				
1	2	3	4	5	
D.	Pure				
1	2	3	4	5	
E.	Workers at home				
1	2	3	4	5	
F.	Kind				
1	2	3	4	5	
G.	Subject to their husbands				
1	2	3	4	5	

V. For Employees (application of servant passages)

Sincerely and honestly performing the work demanded

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

Doing your work heartily as to the Lord

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

Not argumentative but appropriate in speech to and about your employer

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

VI. For Employers (application of master passages)

Granting justice and fairness to employees

1	2	3	4	5	Comments
---	---	---	---	---	----------

Avoiding threats but instead appropriate in speech to and about your employees

APPENDIX B

ASSESSMENT FOR TEACHERS

This tool is intended to help toward self-assessment and help from others to do what we read in Ephesians 4:15,16.

...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Use the following assessment scale and/or comment on the area of focus.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Nearing Maturity |
| 2 | Making Rapid Progress |
| 3 | Making Normal Progress |
| 4 | Making Slow Progress |
| 5 | Needing Help |

Do I regularly read and meditate on the Scriptures privately (Col 3:16)?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Do I regularly interact with others who read and meditate on the Scriptures (Col 3:16)?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Constant Practice: Is my discernment of good and evil developing due to my practice of the truth (Heb 5:14)?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Do I seek to model the truths I teach as Jesus did (John 13:14,15)?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Diligence in Preparation: Do I make it a practice to work hard at study to accurately handle the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15)?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Note one or two areas of greatest progress for which to thank God.

Note one or two areas of greatest weakness you desire to work on over the next year.

Children's Sunday School Teachers: What age children have you taught in the past? Which age groups have you enjoyed teaching the most? Is there an age group that you think you would like to try teaching that you have not yet taught?

Children's Sunday School Teachers: Is there an adult in the church that is not presently teaching that you would like to invite to teach with you to help equip them for a possible teaching ministry? Would you feel comfortable asking them or would you like a church leader to ask?

APPENDIX C

ASSESSMENT FOR OLDER MEN

This tool is intended to help toward self-assessment and help from others to do what we read in Ephesians 4:15,16....*speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

Use the following assessment scale and/or comment on the area of focus.

- 1 Nearing Maturity
- 2 Making Rapid Progress
- 3 Making Normal Progress
- 4 Making Slow Progress
- 5 Needing Help

From Titus 2

Temperate: Do I practice self-control rather than over-indulgence?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Dignified: Do I hear or sense from others that they respect me?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Sensible: Do I live by biblical principles instead of passions and impulses?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Sound in the faith: Am I able to locate and explain the major teachings of the Bible (Jesus is God. Salvation is by grace not works.)?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Sound in love: Instead of having a critical spirit, do I sincerely love God and His people?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Sound in perseverance: When obeying Christ becomes difficult, do I resist the urge to just give up?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

From 1 Timothy 5:1

Am I serving as a father to the CBC church family?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

(If you would like to start or make progress, are you open to some interactive instruction on how you might better serve younger men in this way?)

From 1 John 2:13,14

Can it be said of me that I “know Him” (that I have a mature knowledge of God)?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Note one or two areas of greatest progress for which to thank God.

Note one or two areas of greatest weakness you desire to work on over the next year.

APPENDIX D
ASSESSMENT FOR OLDER WOMEN

This tool is intended to help toward self-assessment and help from others to do what we read in Ephesians 4:15,16.

... speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Use the following assessment scale and/or comment on the area of focus.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Nearing Maturity |
| 2 | Making Rapid Progress |
| 3 | Making Normal Progress |
| 4 | Making Slow Progress |
| 5 | Needing Help |

From Titus 2

Reverent: Do I regard all of life as a sacred duty before God?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Malicious gossip: Can I be trusted with confidential information?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Not enslaved to wine: Am I free from addiction to alcohol and other substances?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Teaching what is good: If others believe and behave as I do, will they become more like Christ?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Would my husband say that I love him?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Would my children say that I love them?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Am I thoughtful (careful to act and react based on thought not reactive emotion)?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Am I pure in thoughts and actions?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Am I a hard worker at home?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Am I kind?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Am I subject to my own husband?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

From 1 Timothy 5:2

Am I serving as a mother to the CBC church body?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

(If you would like to start or make progress, are you open to some interactive instruction on how you might better serve younger women in this way?)

Note one or two areas of greatest progress for which to thank God.

Note one or two areas of greatest weakness you desire to work on over the next year.

APPENDIX E

ASSESSMENT FOR DEACONS (AND PROSPECTIVE DEACONS)

This tool is intended to help toward self-assessment and help from others to do what we read in Ephesians 4:15,16.... *speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

Use the following assessment scale and/or comment on the area of focus.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Nearing Maturity |
| 2 | Making Rapid Progress |
| 3 | Making Normal Progress |
| 4 | Making Slow Progress |
| 5 | Needing Help |

Deacon means servant: Am I characterized as one who serves?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Comments:

Dignity: Do I take life (especially the lives of others) seriously?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Comments:

Not double-tongued: Do I consistently speak the truth with everyone?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Comments:

Not addicted to wine: Am I free from addiction to alcohol and other substances?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Comments:

Not fond of dishonest gain: Am I honest when I handle money?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Holds the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience: Am I a Bible believing Christian?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Holds the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience: Does my behavior match the life of a disciple as viewed in Scripture?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Husband of one wife: If married, am I faithful to my wife?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Good manager of his children: Do my children respond reasonably well to my leadership in the home?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Good manager of his household: Are all other aspects of my household in good, basic order?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

APPENDIX F

ASSESSMENT FOR ELDERS (AND PROSPECTIVE ELDERS)

This tool will be used in two different settings. First, it will be used in helping determine the readiness of a prospective elder. Second, it will be used to encourage growth in current elders. In both cases, the tool will be used for self-assessment as well as assessment by others.

Several basics must be kept in mind. First, it is important to remember that we never completely arrive in any area. We could always be better than we are. Second, because we differ by personality and background, we must not fall into comparing ourselves with each other. We must learn to see each other before God and becoming all He would have each of us to be. Third, we all have areas where (by God's grace) we are nearly mature. But at the same time, we all have areas where we would have to admit we are weak and need to work on. Fourth, the purpose of this tool and the follow up visit(s) is to speak the truth in love toward spiritual growth. We must never lapse into pride, self-condemnation, unloving criticism, or comparison.

For a prospective elder, when this process is complete, we hope that we all will have agreed that you are ready to serve as elder or that we have clearly surfaced the issues on which you can work and we can help (if needed) to complete your readiness to serve. For a current elder, we hope that we have agreed on which areas you are making good progress in and a few areas on which you can work and we can help (if needed) so that you can serve Christ and His church with even greater fruitfulness.

A. An Elder's Beliefs (Community Bible Church Doctrinal Statement)

While church doctrinal statements have their limitations, they do at least offer a way to discover agreement regarding some major teachings in Scripture. Do the following statements summarize your understanding of what the Bible teaches about each of the listed subjects? Please note any areas of disagreement or questions for discussion.

Section I: The Scriptures

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God (1 Tim 5:18; 2 Tim 3:16,17; 2 Pet 1:20,21; 3:14-16), inerrant in the original writings (Num 23:19; Ps 12:6; 119:89; Mark 13:31), complete as the revelation of God's will for salvation, Christian belief and Christian conduct (Acts 20:32; 2 Tim 3:15-17). We believe that the Scriptures are the supreme and final authority in all matters to which they speak (Num 23:19; John 17:17).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section II: The Godhead

We believe in one God (Deut 6:4; Isa 45:5,6) eternally existing in three equal persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who have the same nature and attributes, but who are distinct in office and activity (Matt 3:16,17; 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4-6).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section III: God the Father

We believe in God the Father (Eph 1:3; 1 Tim 1:1,2), an infinite (Rev 1:4), personal Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love (Luke 10:21,22; John 3:16; Rom 1:7). We believe that He works all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11), that He hears and answers prayer (Matt 6:6), and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 1 Pet 1:3).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section IV: The Person and Work of Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man (John 1:1,14), without ceasing to be God (John 20:28), having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38), in order that He might reveal God (John 1:18) and redeem sinful man (Rom 3:21-24). We believe that He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice (2 Cor 5:21). We believe that our redemption and salvation is guaranteed by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Rom 4:25). We believe that He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-11), is seated at the right hand of the Father (Eph 1:20-23), continually intercedes for His people (Rom 8:34), and will return to earth in great power and glory (2 Thess 1:7-10).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section V: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

We believe that God the Holy Spirit restrains evil in the world and convicts men of sin (John 16:7-11). He also, with God the Father, regenerates (gives spiritual life to) us who were formerly spiritually dead but are now made alive in Christ (John 1:13; 3:8; Acts 16:14; Eph 2:1-5). He is the means by which all believers are baptized by Christ into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). We believe that the Spirit indwells believers permanently (John 14:16,17; 1 Cor 6:19) seals them unto the day of redemption (Eph 4:30), bestows spiritual gifts on each one (1 Cor 12:4-11), and fills those yielded to Him (Eph 5:18). There is no explicit biblical teaching that some spiritual gifts have ceased. There are however some biblical indications (Eph 2:20; 3:1-7; Heb 2:3,4) that certain gifts and miraculous activities associated with the apostles and prophets were meant to be foundational for the church and thus not continue as a regular expression of church life.

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section VI: Angels: Fallen and Unfallen

We believe that angels are spiritual beings (Heb 1:13,14) who were created as sinless personalities and that they occupied different orders and ranks (Dan 10:13; Jude 9). They presently exist in both fallen and unfallen states, the former including Satan and his angels (2 Pet 2:4; Rev 7:12).

We believe that Satan, by his own choice the enemy of God and of the people of God is the originator of sin (Ezek 28:11-19). We believe that he led our first parents into sin (Gen 3:1-19) and now rules as the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4). We believe that he was judged at the cross (John 12:31; Heb 2:14) and that ultimately he will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section VII: Creation

We believe all things in heaven and earth were created by God and exist by His power (Gen 1:1; Col 1:16,17).

We believe that man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27), but that he sinned bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and his descendants (Gen 2:17; 3:19). We believe that man has inherited a sinful nature, is alienated from God, and is in need of salvation (Eph 2:1-3).

We believe that both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26, 27; 2:18). Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order both in the home and in the church (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section VIII: Salvation

We believe that salvation is a gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe that man is justified by grace through faith apart from works (Acts 13:38,39; Rom 6:23; Eph 2:8-10). We believe that those who are born again show signs of spiritual life, such as obedience to God's commands and loving other Christians (Eph 2:8-10; 1 John 3:10). We believe that all true believers, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever (Rom 8:1, 38,39; John 10:27-30).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section IX: Sanctification

We believe that sanctification, which is a setting apart unto God, is positional, progressive, and ultimate. Positionally, it is already complete since the believer is in Christ and is set apart unto God as Christ is set apart unto God (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor 1:2; Heb 10:10-14). Since the believer retains his sinful nature, however, there is need for progressive sanctification whereby the Christian grows in grace by the power of the Spirit (John 17:17; Rom 6:12,13; 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 3:13,14; 1 Thess 5:23). Ultimately (at death or at the return of Christ), the child of God will be completely set free from indwelling sin and made perfect forever (Eph 5:25-27; Phil 3:21; Heb 12:22,23).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section X: The Church

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. (Eph 1:22,23; 5:25-27; 1 Cor 10:32).

We believe that the local church is an assembly of professed believers in Jesus Christ who are voluntarily joined together in one locality (1 Cor 1:1,2; 1 Thess 1:1) for the purpose of worshipping God (Eph 5:18-20), studying the Word of God, observing the ordinances, fellowshiping with God's people (Acts 2:42-47), and being equipped for ministry (Eph 4:11-13).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section XI: The Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of the believer in water into the name of the triune God (Matt 28:18-20; Rom 6:3-5). We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ to remember and reflect on the significance of His death until He comes (1 Cor 11:23-26).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Section XII: Last Things

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom (Matt 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Phil 3:20; 1 Thess 4:15; 2 Tim 4:1; Titus 2:13). We believe in the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15:12-19), the final judgment, the eternal perfect joy of the saints and the endless suffering of the wicked (1 Cor 4:5; 2 Thess 1:7-10; Rev 20:4-6, 11-15).

Agree _____

Notes for Discussion:

Note one or two doctrinal areas of greatest understanding and/or about which you are competent to articulate and discuss freely with others.

Note one doctrinal area in which you desire to grow in your understanding this year so as to be better able to articulate it and discuss it freely with others.

B. An Elder's Practice (Qualifications from Timothy and Titus)

Use the following assessment scale and/or comment on the area of focus.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Nearing Maturity |
| 2 | Making Rapid Progress |
| 3 | Making Normal Progress |
| 4 | Making Slow Progress |
| 5 | Needing Help |

Above Reproach: Would a fair-minded member of the church say, "I believe you to be a genuine, mature disciple of Christ who is ready to help lead this church"?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Husband of one wife: If married, am I faithful to my wife?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Comments:

Temperate: Am I free of excess in all areas of life?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Comments:

Prudent: Do I live my life based on principles not impulses?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Respectable: Do I tend to order my life according to the Bible?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Hospitable: Do I demonstrate a willingness to use my home and possessions to welcome others to be a part of my life?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Able to Teach: Am I able to understand and communicate the main ideas of the Bible?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Not Addicted to Wine: Am I free from addictions to alcohol and other substances?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Not quick-tempered: Am I able to control myself when provoked or mistreated?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Gentle: Am I fair-minded and reasonable?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Uncontentious: Do I avoid creating unnecessary conflicts?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Free from the Love of Money: Do I seek after God and His kingdom first instead of money and things?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Manage his Household well: If I lead the church like I do in my home, will others be satisfied?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Not a new convert: Have I been a Christian long enough to avoid any pride over being an elder?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Good reputation toward outsiders: Do people outside the church respect me?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Note one or two areas of greatest progress for which to thank God.

Note one or two areas of greatest weakness you desire to work on over the next year.

C. An Elder's Service (Titus 1:9,10)

Do I have opportunities to exhort others in sound doctrine?

As opportunities present themselves, am I able to exhort others in sound doctrine?

Do I have opportunities to refute those who contradict sound doctrine?

As opportunities present themselves, am I able to refute those who contradict sound doctrine?

Note one or two aspects of service where God has used me this last year.

Note one aspect of service I desire to work on over the next year.

APPENDIX G

ASSESSMENT FOR MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

(Ministers of the Gospel should do the elder assessment also)

This tool is intended to help toward self-assessment and help from others to do what we read in Ephesians 4:15,16

... speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Use the following assessment scale and/or comment on the area of focus.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Nearing Maturity |
| 2 | Making Rapid Progress |
| 3 | Making Normal Progress |
| 4 | Making Slow Progress |
| 5 | Needing Help |

From 1 Timothy

Comments:

Solid understanding of God's house order (3:14,15)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Able to point out false doctrine (4:1-6)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Disciplined for the purpose of godliness (4:7)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Devoted to public reading, exhortation , and teaching of Scripture (4:13)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Awareness and use of spiritual gift(s) (4:14)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Pays close attention to his life and teaching (4:16)

1 2 3 4 5

Avoids the love of money (6:10)

1 2 3 4 5

Fights the good fight of faith (6:12)

1 2 3 4 5

From Titus 2

Example of good deeds in all things: Does he exemplify what God wants to see for good works in others?

1 2 3 4 5

Purity in doctrine: Does his teaching conform to the New Testament gospel and teaching about the Christian life?

1 2 3 4 5

Dignified: Does he carry on the work with an appropriate seriousness that matches the task?

1 2 3 4 5

Sound in speech: Does his speech tend to bring spiritual health to others?

1 2 3 4 5

Note one or two areas of greatest progress for which to thank God.

Note one or two areas of greatest weakness you desire to work on over the next year.

APPENDIX H

FIRST PRINCIPLES: SUMMARY AND RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

One difficulty in creating an assessment tool for disciples is limiting its scope. The entire New Testament is too much material from which to construct an assessment tool. But how does one select some aspects of discipleship and leave others out? This tool aims to help each disciple assess his/her understanding and practice of the teaching of the New Testament by limiting its scope to the current year's teaching in our church meetings and/or small group discussions. This particular assessment is based on the sessions in the discussion series *The First Principles*, Series 1 by Jeff Reed. Under each topic, please check if you prepared for and attended the session(s), accept or complete a summary statement of the teaching, assess your current response, write down any questions/concerns you have on the topic, and request (if desired) to discuss that topic further with a mentor or church leader.

Where appropriate, use the following assessment scale and/or comment on the area of focus.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Nearing Maturity |
| 2 | Making Rapid Progress |
| 3 | Making Normal Progress |
| 4 | Making Slow Progress |
| 5 | Needing Help |

Book 1: *Becoming a Disciple*

1. The Gospel Message

I prepared for this session. _____ I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Christ, the eternal Son of God, became a man, died for our sins, and was raised from the dead on the third day. Those who believe receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.
(Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I have believed in the Christ of the gospel and received forgiveness of my sins _____.

My Questions/Concerns:

I desire further discussion with a mentor _____ or a church leader _____.

2. Baptism – The Next Step

I prepared for this session. _____ I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Baptism is the believer's first act of obedience. It declares that we belong to Jesus Christ and His church. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: As a disciple of Christ, I have been baptized to declare that Christ has saved me and that I belong to Him and His church. _____

My Questions/Concerns:

I desire further discussion with a mentor _____ or a church leader _____.

3. The First Principles

I prepared for this session. _____ I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: The New Testament contains foundational teachings that disciples must know and practice to grow spiritually. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I am learning these foundational teachings.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments/Questions/Concerns:

4. Renewing our Minds

I prepared for this session. _____ I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Disciples are commanded to offer their entire lives to the merciful God who saved them and then be transformed by renewing their minds with the truth of God reflected on both privately and corporately. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response A: The apostle Paul introduces the practice section of the epistle of Romans (chapters 12-16) with an appeal to each believer in Christ to offer himself to God as a living sacrifice. This is presented as a lifelong commitment to place yourself at God's disposal as a committed follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you offered yourself completely to God? _____

Response B: I actively work at renewing my mind with the truth.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

5. Lifestyle of a Disciple

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: In areas of belief and behavior where God has not issued clear commands, disciples must exercise love and allow one another to live their convictions before God without becoming judgmental. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I am learning to live at peace with other believers who differ with me over debatable issues.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

Book 2: *Belonging to a Family of Families* (Jeff Reed)

1. The Centerpiece of Christ's Plan – The Church

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: The church is God's means to declare His wisdom and grace to the watching world and to the spiritual powers of the universe. God revealed His plan for the church especially to the apostle Paul. We must give special attention to Paul's teaching about the church. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I understand and seek to live my life in light of the truth that the church is the centerpiece of Christ's plan.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

2. The Church as a Family of Families

I prepared for this session. _____ I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: The church is God's household. As such, we are to treat one another as family. Only in such an atmosphere can the church fulfill its role as the pillar and support of the truth. In other words, the truth of Christ will be judged by how His family gets along. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I faithfully live out my role as a member of God's household, the church.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

3. Living Within a Believing Family

I prepared for this session. _____ I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Each household member must live out God's created order. "Husbands are to lead and love their wives; wives are to follow and respect their husbands. Children are to obey their parents; fathers are to assume the responsibility of shaping the spiritual direction of their children. Slaves are to submit to their masters; masters are to deal patiently with their slaves (Reed, p. 32)." (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I faithfully follow God's created order for me in the home.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

4. Living Within a Family of Families

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Just as there is a created order in the home, there is a created order in the household of God. The older men and women are to lead by example and teach the younger men and women much like spiritual fathers and mothers. The younger men and women are to be good learners much like spiritual children. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I faithfully follow God's created order for me in the household of God.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

5. Setting Life Priorities

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: We must make the most of our time by walking in wisdom. "We will either fill our lives with the pursuits of the world...or we will be filled with the Spirit. In this context then, being filled with the Spirit is allowing our lives to be filled with Christ and His purposes (Reed, p. 48)." (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I am walking in wisdom and therefore making Christ's purpose and mission mine. I do this only under the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

Book 3: *Participating in the Mission of the Church* (Jeff Reed)

1. Participating in the Mission – Worldwide

I prepared for this session. _____ I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Paul's missionary method is summarized by a quote from David Hesselgrave. "...go where people are, preach the gospel, gain converts, gather them into churches, instruct them in the faith, choose leaders, and commend believers to the grace of God (p. 17)." (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I have a mature understanding of how I can participate in the mission of the church.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

2. Participating in the Mission – At Home

I prepared for this session. _____ I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: "Believers are to live in their communities as if they have a mission – being an effective ongoing witness for the gospel, and they are to live in their families and churches according to Christ's plan for His church – giving credibility to God's Word before the watching world (Reed, p. 24)." (I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I understand and live according to my role and place in the local church.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

3. Cultivating Our Opportunities

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Christian disciples are to cultivate opportunities by living wisely in the presence of unbelievers. When conversations move toward spiritual issues, they are to speak of the gospel graciously and wisely. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response a: I live my life wisely in the presence of unbelievers.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

Response b: I have developed the skill of talking about the gospel with grace and wisdom.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

4. Defending Our Faith

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Christian disciples need to be prepared to offer sound and coherent answers to those who ask about their faith. These answers must be given respectfully and graciously. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response a: I am prepared to give answers to those who ask me about my hope in Christ.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

Response b: I am respectful and gracious when I speak about Christ to non-Christians.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

5. Using Our Households as Mission Centers

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Without declaring all New Testament narrative to establish an ongoing precedent, it is worth observing (and discussing) that recorded initial New Testament evangelism proclaimed the gospel to adults or entire households. The next stage of evangelism sought to proclaim the gospel to those naturally associated with those who had received the message. This summary differs somewhat from Jeff Reed's title and purpose within this lesson. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I prayerfully seek to cultivate opportunities to discuss the gospel with those I most frequently associate.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

Book 4: *Cultivating Habits of the Heart* (Jeff Reed)

1. Christ Dwelling in Our Hearts

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: In the context of Ephesians 3, Christ dwelling in our hearts refers to "...a heart overwhelmed by comprehending what Christ has done and is doing (Reed, p. 16)." This forms the only basis upon which to build disciplined habits that cover every area of life. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: Christ dwells in my heart in the sense that I am overwhelmed by comprehending what Christ has done and is doing in my life.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

2. Cultivating Habits in Our Individual Lives

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Christian disciples are to focus their thoughts on Christ's principles so that His truth will renew our lives as we meditate on it and discuss it with others in the body of Christ.

(Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: My thoughts are focused on the principles of Christ in the New Testament by personal meditation and discussions in the Christian community.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

3. Cultivating Habits in Our Families

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Christian parents, especially fathers, are to treasure God's word in their own hearts and then teach the truths of Scripture to their children in the midst of everyday life. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: As a parent, I am actively applying Scripture to my own life and then teaching its meaning and application to my children.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

4. Cultivating habits in Our Church Family

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: Christian disciples are not to merely attend church but assemble with the purpose of mutually considering how to stimulate each other to love and good deeds. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: When I gather with other believers, I actively consider how I might stimulate them to love and good deeds.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

5. Cultivating Habits in Our Life Work

I prepared for this session. _____

I attended a discussion session. _____

Summary: I work diligently to provide for my needs and the needs of my family so as not to be a burden on others. (Choose: I accept this summary ____ or my summary follows ____.)

Response: I am diligent in my work life so as to provide for myself and family.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments / Questions / Concerns:

Note one or two areas of greatest progress for which to thank God.

Note one or two areas of greatest weakness you desire to work on over the next year.

APPENDIX I

GIFTEDNESS ASSESSMENT¹

The following assessment guide should be completed after reading and reflecting on the “Community Life and Ministry” summary found in the Project Guides and Models section of the course, Pauline Epistles: Strategies for Establishing Churches. It outlines the three main teaching passages on gifts in the New Testament: Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, and Romans 12:3-16. Reprints of this summary are also available. This Giftedness Assessment Guide is based on concepts presented in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

The working of the Spirit, then, can be summarized into a variety of gifts, services, and activities:

Varieties of gifts

Varieties of ministries (acts of service, ways of serving)

Varieties of effects (the outcome of one’s performance, effectiveness, what is produced)

VARIETIES OF GIFTS

1. Which of the gifts listed in these passages are most attractive to you?

2. With which of these gifts do you think you are or might be most effective and capable?

3. Consider any input you have received from the people who know you best – family, friends, leaders, others in the church – concerning your gifts. In their observation, which of these gifts do you manifest? Which of these gifts are not manifested in you?

¹ <http://antiochschool.edu/antiochschool/download/assessment/giftednessAssessment.pdf> (c) LearnCorp, L.L.C., 2003 (accessed February 11, 2011). Used by permission.

4. What do you consider to be your natural talents and abilities? Are any of the gifts you have identified closely aligned with your natural talents and abilities? Keep in mind that it is probably that God would take some of your natural abilities and energize them through your spiritual gifts (supernaturally broadening or deepening what He has already given you through His creative design from conception onward through your childrearing experiences.)

5. Your conclusions regarding the above questions are what comprise your “natural ability, spiritual gift cluster”. List or describe your natural abilities – spiritual gifts cluster in a profile that follows the pattern of what seems most logical and natural to you.

VARIETES OF MINISTRIES

1. What kinds of ministry have you gravitated toward up to this point in your Christian life?

2. What specific ministry experiences have you had? What involvement have you had with any organized or formal ministry responsibilities?

3. Are there any ministries you have always wanted to pursue, yet have not had the courage or the opportunity to do so? If so, what are they?

4. What kinds of roles in formal ministries have other people encouraged you to be involved in? Is there any pattern in the types of things you have been offered?

5. How does your natural abilities – spiritual gift cluster relate to the types of ministry in which you have found yourself involved? What insights do you gain from this comparison?

6. What is your present vocation? How do your roles and spheres of involvement within your vocation relate to your natural abilities – spiritual gifts cluster?

7. What kind of work (i.e. job, vocation) have you enjoyed the most and in it have experienced the most success? Consider how aligning your work or vocation with your natural abilities – spiritual gift might maximize your ministry for Christ in the everyday work world.

VARIETIES OF EFFECTS:

1. In what ways have you seen God use you in ministry?

2. In what types of ministry have you had the best effect? The most results? the most fruit?

3. What specific ministry involvement has been the most productive and has delivered the most powerful results?

4. List the times you felt God was really at work through you. What were you doing at that time? What kind of ministry?

5. Are you consistently involved in similar ministry on an ongoing basis? If not, why not?

VISIONS AND DECISIONS

1. What sorts of ministry visions have come to you during or as a result of this assessment process? Which ones do you find exhilarating and energizing?

2. What steps might you take at present to pursue them? How do they relate to ministry needs in the life of your local church? If these issues are unclear, talk them through with a church leader.

3. Review the ministry plan of your church, and list the ministries for which you feel most suited. Share these conclusions with the church leaders or with a specific leader who is most responsible for shepherding and training you. Make the decisions necessary regarding this ministry involvement.

APPENDIX J

A REVIEW: *THE FIRST PRINCIPLES* BY JEFF REED

The most basic tool BILD has produced to communicate the mission of the church to everyone in the church is *The First Principles* Series by Jeff Reed. The uniqueness of the series is that it ties personal discipleship, family relationships, and lifework into the mission of the church to both plant and establish the church around the world. As the back cover of each booklet states, the series is a set of "...dialogue-based Bible study guides for use by church leaders and mature Christians to establish believers and churches in the faith, sort of a 21st century catechism. Rather than a typical information-based, fill-in-the-blank approach, the series employs a highly effective learning process involving biblical passages and readings, community dialogue, and personal reflection and projects. Teaching core principles of Christ and His Apostles, this series guides participants in becoming firmly established in their faith."¹ While the series is not perfect, the structure of the series is sound, the principles for the church are crucial, and the approach has proven itself in numerous cultural settings that it is an effective tool (with cultural adaptations) for equipping the saints for the work of service.

Becoming a Disciple: First Principles of the Faith (Series 1, Book 1)

Session 1: The Gospel Message (Acts 10:34-48)

Using Luke's summary of one of Peter's messages is interesting as opposed to a gospel summary out of an epistle. The projects are helpful: a summary of the gospel message and writing your testimony with a commitment to share it with someone.

¹ Jeff Reed, *The First Principles: Becoming a Disciple* (LearnCorp Resources, 1998), back cover.

Together, these offer an early way to assess the professing disciple's grasp of the gospel. But this session is not a complete evangelistic tool. A more extensive evangelistic tool is needed to precede this so as to insure a solid grasp of the gospel.

Session 2: Baptism – The Next Step (Matt 28:16-20)

Many modern discipleship materials do not address baptism. It is controversial and they leave baptism up to the church. Christ said it was the very next step. Jeff Reed follows the New Testament order by placing it right after believing the gospel. The J.I. Packer reading, while helpful, allows all modes (pouring, sprinkling, and immersion) and mentions that the apostles baptized believers and their dependents (infant baptism). Since this opinion differs from the teachings of CBC, we will mention this to participants in advance. In our culture, there is a need for a more extensive study to answer the questions of those disciplined in other church traditions. An overview of the baptism passages in Acts offers a strong argument for believers' baptism. Churches that practice believers' baptism may desire to offer a stronger presentation of that position than offered in this booklet.

Session 3: The First Principles (Col 2:6-8)

Verse eight reads, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” While there certainly are first principles of the faith according to Hebrews 5:11-14, the contrast in the Colossians passage seems to be between the elementary principles of the world and Christ Himself.

Since the content of the chapter is sound and helpful, we will only mention to participants that perhaps the Hebrews 5 passage would have been the more appropriate key text.

Session 4: Renewing Our Minds (Rom 12:1,2)

The principle of initial commitment and continual renewal of the mind is critical and wisely introduced early in this series.

Session 5: Lifestyle of a Disciple (Rom 14:1-23)

Introducing the difference between biblical absolutes and debatable issues is a bold but wise decision. Many young believers discover this the hard way rather than being taught the difference.

Session 6: Reshaping our Lives

Encouraging disciples to take time to reflect, journal, memorize Scripture, summarize, make decisions, take on personal projects, and pray rather than rush on to the next subject is another helpful aspect of this series. Since this session is a standard feature in every book with very little variation, it will not be reviewed under each book in the series.

Belonging to a Family of Families: First Principles of Community Life (Series 1, Book 2)

As the title suggests, this book introduces the disciple to life in the community of the church. Instead of merely dealing with discipleship as individualistic as most western

discipleship materials do, this series understands that belonging to a local body of the church is an essential aspect of being a disciple. This aspect of the series reflects the New Testament picture of discipleship.

Session 1: The Centerpiece of Christ's Plan – The Church (Eph 2:18-3:11)

This passage and the accompanying readings introduce God's goal for establishing the church. He intends to display His wisdom in bringing Jews and Gentiles together in one body to rulers and authorities in heavenly places. Even if this passage has a universal church flavor, the reality would be present in every local expression of the church.

Session 2: The Church as a Family of Families (1 Tim 3:14-16)

The church is shown to be a real household of God that is ordered so as to be the pillar and support of the truth. God wants His truth not merely proclaimed in word, but demonstrated in the life of His people in the church.

Session 3: Living Within a Believing Family (Eph 5:22-6:9)

There is God-given design to be maintained in individual households. "For the church to function orderly, its families must be orderly. God created an order to things, and when we follow His created order, families and churches work."²

² Jeff Reed, *The First Principles: Belonging to a Family of Families* (LearnCorp Resources, 1997), 32.

Session 4: Living Within a Family of Families (Titus 2:1-15)

Just as there is a design to be followed in individual households, so there is a design that is to be followed in the church. Here Paul addresses the roles and responsibilities for older men, older women, younger men, younger women, and bondslaves. “The way we live in community, as a church, makes a difference in our impact for the gospel of Jesus Christ.”³

Session 5: Setting Life’s Priorities (Eph 5:15-21)

All disciples must see how the mission of the church gives focus to their life priorities. Walking as wise men and women forms the foundation for the household text which follows. Disciples must be a vital part of the Christian community (the church) so that each member helps the community fulfill her mission.

One aspect of family life that is not dealt with here is that of corrective discipline. This aspect of the Christian community must be taught and understood early. Placing this in the context of a family of families would provide a context of love, support, and encouragement. Several passages could be used to introduce this principle. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 offers the emphasis on corrective action toward those who violate community standards, treating one another not as enemies but as brothers. Tying this with Jesus’ teaching on the subject in Matthew 18 would provide a process as well as background.

³ Reed, *Belonging to a Family of Families*, 41.

Participating in the Mission of the Church: First Principles of Community Purpose
(Series 1, Book 3)

It seems that many churches are either all about missions or all about their own spiritual growth. This series biblically unites the internal life of the church with her mission.

Session 1: Participating in the Mission – Worldwide (Acts 13:1-14:28)

While we must be careful not to limit the way disciples connect with the unbelieving world in evangelism, we must never lose sight of the way in which Christ did direct His apostles to further the kingdom: proclaiming the gospel, gathering believers into churches, appointing men to lead the churches, and then repeating the cycle.

Session 2: Participating in the Mission at Home (Titus 2:1-3:14)

All too often, the modern Western church thinks only of methods of presenting the simplified gospel while the New Testament makes a priority of the quality of life of the believers. “At the foundation of an effective witness are churches who live – both in their lives as communities and in their individual families – in ways which adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ ... Only then will our sharing of the gospel have integrity.”⁴

Session 3: Cultivating Our Opportunities (Col 4:2-6)

The Western church has become far too “events” oriented with regard to the gospel. Paul directs the Colossian believers to prayerfully make the most of every

⁴ Jeff Reed, *Participating in the Mission of the Church* (LearnCorp Resources, 1997), 24.

opportunity, graciously responding to each person at every opportunity. This passage does not forget praying for gifted evangelist/missionaries, but it includes all the saints in the proclamation of the gospel.

Session 4: Defending our Faith (1 Pet 3:8-17)

In convincing logical sequence, Jeff Reed now shows how Peter commands believers to be ready to make a defense for the hope we have in the gospel. Once again, this reveals a more biblical context for proclaiming the gospel as opposed to event oriented evangelism or “cold turkey” confrontations. Many Christians have good reason to feel uncomfortable about evangelism. The methods they have been taught tend to be rude and ill-advised.

Session 5: Using Our Households as Mission Centers (Acts 10:1-33)

Jeff Reed admits that his chosen topic is not Luke’s primary point: “Even though the main point of Luke’s recounting this story is not the power of a household unit in furthering the progress of the gospel, it was clearly an aspect of his point.”⁵ Reed uses this passage to introduce the many instances in the book of Acts where entire households came to faith in the gospel. It is seen frequently enough to call our attention to the fact that this was intentional, not accidental.

⁵ Reed, *Participating in the Mission of the Church*, 46.

Cultivating Habits of the Heart: First Principles of Disciplined Living (Series 1, Book 4)

“Much of our contemporary discipleship material focuses on habits of the individual, with little attention given to family and community habits. We are called to spend time with God...with a high degree of disciplined habit. There is almost no corresponding level of ‘habits’ challenged in our other spheres of life.... God never intended our lives to be based on a set of individual daily habits, but rather on a whole life orientation that grows out of family and community life.”⁶ Once again, Jeff Reed has touched on an extremely crucial aspect missing in contemporary discipleship material: community.

Session 1: Christ Dwelling in our Hearts (Eph 3:14-21)

Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian church captures what we ought to desire to be going on in the hearts of every disciple within the community of the church. It serves as a fitting starting point so that we do not get hung up on means without knowing the goal.

Session 2: Cultivating Habits in our Individual Lives (Col 3:1-17)

While there is a private aspect to this passage, it ends with the community. Letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly includes private meditation, but it does not end there. “...we are to turn our private study and mediation into community sharing. This implies that our inner renewal from the word of Christ takes place in community.

⁶ Jeff Reed, *The First Principles: Cultivating Habits of the Heart* (LearnCorp Resources, 1998), 5.

We learn from each other. The word of Christ dwells in our lives at its fullest when we live and learn with a community of believers.”⁷

Session 3: Cultivating Habits in our Families (Eph 6:1-4)

It is obvious that the children of disciples are not to be left to figure things out on their own. It is the responsibility of the parents, especially the father, to train them in Christ’s instruction. This is not primarily a “how to” lesson but a grasping of the concept for the parents. Further reading/discussion would be helpful to train parents in discipling their children.

Session 4: Cultivating Habits in our Church Family (Heb 10:23-25)

“So often today church is understood as a place to attend.”⁸ This session destroys the “attendance is all that matters” myth and seeks to get at the heart of why we should be a participating part of the church. The Hebrews passage and the readings move us to seek what is to happen when we go to church meetings. We go not only to receive but to contribute.

Session 5: Cultivating Habits in Your Lifework (1 Thess 4:9-12)

Disciples are to work and provide for themselves instead of using” spiritual” excuses not to work. In other words, having a disciplined work ethic is a first principle of the Christian life.

⁷ Reed, *Cultivating Habits of the Heart*, 25.

⁸ Reed, 40.

While the topic of prayer is certainly surfaced in session one, the so-called Lord's prayer could be referenced in both sessions one and two. The model prayer is a crucial piece of the discipline of private prayer and serves to balance ones prayer life between God's concerns (first three requests) and the disciple's concerns (last three requests). There are obvious parallels between these six requests and Paul's prayers. Paul certainly demonstrates that he desired the community to live according to the revealed will of God (Your will be done) and that the Christian community be a forgiving community (Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors).

Enjoying Your Relationship: First Principles of Marriage (Series 2, Book 1)

In keeping with the emphases of the New Testament epistles, the first principles series deals with family relationships early and often. Since relationships within the family are a major aspect of New Testament discipleship (according to Jesus, Paul, and Peter), those relationships must be placed under the authority of Christ the Head.

Session 1: Cultural Confusion – Marriage Redefined (Titus 1:10-16)

Even in Paul's day, false teachers were coming into the church and teaching things that upset whole families. Paul did not despair. He commanded Titus to silence these teachers and stop the damage in the church's families. We too must recognize those who are upsetting families in the Christian community and stop them from infiltrating our churches.

Session 2: God's Basic Design for Marriage (Eph 5:22-33)

This passage is probably the best known household text in the New Testament. But given today's culture, it is an extremely radical statement. This passage (like many others) is considered culturally irrelevant. With a brief acknowledgement, passages like this are summarily dismissed and some culturally acceptable mantra replaces them. But is this not the same thing that Paul said was happening in Titus' setting. We must establish the saints in the teaching of Christ and His apostles so that we can live out the gospel before a watching world.

Session 3: Spirit of a Marriage (1 Pet 3:1-7)

This passage and readings probe the internal spirit of a marriage. The wife is commanded to have a gentle and quiet spirit. The husband is to so treat his wife that he demonstrates that he knows she is a joint heir of the grace of life with him. The intergenerational applications are helpful since not all are or will be married.

Session 4: Marriage and Community Life (Titus 2:3-5)

While not giving any specific plans, this session introduces the need for the church community and the nuclear family to work together to restore biblical roles of the man and the woman. Younger men and women need both teaching and modeling of the complementary roles of the husband and wife. If this was necessary in the first century, how much greater is the need today.

Session 5: Building an Intergenerational Commitment (1 Tim 5:1-16)

After the introduction to the passage in which we are to treat one another as family, this session focuses on marriage relationships being permanent. We are in great need of learning to work through problems instead of opting out of the relationship.

This booklet lays out the basics of relationships in the nuclear family and how the families relate to the church. This is certainly not a how to booklet. It is a fundamental foundational work from which we may begin applying these truths to life.

Passing on Your Beliefs: First Principles of Family Life (Series 2, Book 2)

Session 1: Cultural Breakdown of Family Life (2 Tim 3:1-17)

The passage speaks of the increasing evil of the last days. Within this context we learn that the disobedience of children to their parents will grow worse. We do not train our children in a morally neutral climate. The trend of the culture is to go from “bad to worse” (3:13). This session lends urgency to the task of Christian parents and the church to counteract the direction of the culture on our children.

Session 2: God’s Basic Design for Family Life (Eph 6:1-4)

Once again with very little attention to “how to”, this session outlines the responsibilities of both children and parents (as represented by the father). Following God’s design will make a believing family counter-cultural.

Session 3: Shaping a Young Life (Col 3:20,21)

In this passage, Paul adds one insight to the children and also to the fathers. Children are to obey "...because it is pleasing to the Lord". Fathers are not to exasperate their children so that they will not lose heart. The John MacArthur reading offers a very helpful expansion on ways in which parents might exasperate their children.

Session 4: The Family in Community Life (Titus 2:1-9)

Paul addresses Titus to protect the church from false teachers who damage families. Instead, Titus is to speak things fitting for sound doctrine. He then addresses older men, older women, young women, and young men as to how they should conduct themselves. It is clear that the older men and women are to be encouraging the younger men and women in their lives as Christians. The church is doing many things but leaving undone some of the most critical aspects of ministry. This first principle applied would do much to stop the damage of family disasters in the church.

Session 5: Managing Our Households (1 Tim 3:4,5)

This session's focus is on the "significance of men carefully managing their homes."⁹ This is drawn out of the elder qualification regarding the spiritual well-being of the father. Many interpretive and applicational questions surround this passage. What age of children is Paul thinking of in this statement? Is Jeff Reed correct that an elder's children must be believers or is the King James translation "faithful" more accurate? Certainly the main point of this session is accurate: the father bears a great responsibility to oversee the training of his children.

⁹ Jeff Reed, *The First Principles: Passing on Your Beliefs* (LearnCorp Resources, 1998), 54.

This booklet surfaces a major issue in the modern western church: the training of the children of believers. While the parents are the primary disciplers of their children, the church community is to aid in the training of the parents and the children. The booklet does not get specific on how to do this. It confronts us with the principles and encourages careful thought and community discussion about how to carry them out.

Envisioning fruitful Life Work: First Principles of Ministry (Series 2, Book 3)

Helping Christian disciples understand that the Lordship of Christ extends over all of life is in fact a critical and often missed aspect of discipleship. Having this topic addressed in this series certainly reflects the issues Paul addresses in his letters to churches. Many get the mistaken notion that discipleship is just about “spiritual” issues not “secular” issues. One’s work life must be transformed just as surely as other areas of life.

Session 1: Created for Good Works (Eph 2:8-10)

The main issue of the session is accurately termed “our calling to a life of good works” which is certainly found in this passage. However, the direction Jeff Reed takes the lesson is toward the concept of Christian vocation or lifework:

Our jobs and careers would fall under the idea of good works. Yet, when our lives are over, God is not going to be concerned about our statuses or salaries but whether our careers were good works in and of themselves. It also seems that we each have a lifework, which is made up of a sum of all the work God created for each of us to do in this life, and that seems to grow out of the way He has uniquely made us.¹⁰

¹⁰ Jeff Reed, *The First Principles: Envisioning Fruitful Life Work* (LearnCorp Resources, 1998), 15,16.

The quote by Stott focuses on the fact that all believers are called to service. The quote by Ryken supports the concept that every Christian has a unique calling into his/her vocation which includes all of our work. While these writings are thought provoking and biblical, it is difficult to read these conclusions out of the passage chosen (Eph 2:8-10). Neither context nor the passage itself speaks to the unique way God has made each member of the body.

The good works Paul speaks of include both actions and attitudes in every area of life. Some works are common to all believers (speaking the truth, generous giving, serving, submitting to authority, etc.). Other good works are age, gender, and/or station-in-life specific (wives-submit to husbands; husbands-love wives; children-obey parents; fathers-instruct/discipline; etc.). The use of the term “call” in Ephesians to refer to careers or professions appears to be read into the text, not out of the text. Our “calling” according to Paul is a term used to describe our position in Christ and something we are all to walk worthy of (4:1). The good works Paul has in mind are those things listed in the second half of this letter as applications of how to live as a member of Christ’s body.

Perhaps Philippians 3:7-16 teaches the concept of a more individual call to particular life work. Paul states that he must “...press on so that I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus” (v. 12). Perhaps here Paul was speaking more specifically about a personal calling instead of the general goal of Christlikeness to which all believers are called. Otherwise, one must turn to the passages on spiritual gifts to address the unique way each member of the body will serve Christ and the rest of the body.

Session 2: Masters, Slaves, and Contemporary Work (Eph 6:5-9)

New Testament discipleship addresses all aspects of everyday life. Christ is not just seeking to reform our “religious” lives. Christ’s disciples differ from the world at home and at work. Christians should understand their role at work whether as an employee or as an employer. The ultimate authority of Christ informs how both think of their work as being unto Christ, not just to men.

Session 3: A Disciplined Work Ethic (2 Thess 3:6-15)

Christian disciples work to take care of themselves. They are not to “live off” others. Paul boldly states here that if a man will not work, he should not eat. The extended Ryken quote strongly supports Paul’s point in this passage.

Session 4: Becoming Cheerful Givers (2 Cor 9:6-9)

Another aspect of the good works God intends for believers is giving. Paul’s encouragement to the Corinthians captures both the generous and cheerful spirit Christians were to have in their giving.

Session 5: A Singleminded Focus on our Lifework (1 Cor 9:24-27)

Paul does definitely invite the Corinthians to “...run in such a way that you may win” (v. 24). Therefore, what Paul is describing about his own life is something in which he wants all believers to engage. Because the unique lifework teaching was not clearly established in the first passage, this chapter lacks a biblical foundation for the point Jeff Reed desires.

Building for Future Generations (Series 2, Book 4)

Session 1: Investments, Retirement, and Personal Success (1Tim 6:17-19)

Paul warns those who are rich not to be proud or materialistic. They are to place their hope in God not their wealth. They are to be rich in good works. They are to invest heavily in the progress of the gospel and the needs of believers. In doing so, they begin to grasp what real living is all about.

Sesison 2: Investing in the Local Church (Rom 12:3-16)

Paul compares the church to the human body which has members that serve the body differently. This is to be done in a context of committed love and devotion to one another. The western church knows little of the kind of community expected in the body of Christ. Maturity in Christ will never happen unless we are committed to Christ at the Head and mutually to the members of His body the church.

Session 3: Investing in the Progress of the Gospel (Phil 1:27-2:30)

The Scripture passage and the readings draw our attention to the churches of Philippi and Antioch as examples of churches committed to the progress of the gospel. While not neglecting the need in their own locale, they also willingly gave of their wealth and personnel to see the gospel spread and churches planted. What powerful exhortations and examples for our churches to consider today!

Session 4: Investing for Eternity (1 Cor 3:10-15)

Jeff Reed interprets/applies this passage of judgment on Christians who build improperly on the foundation of Christ as referring to all believers. Contextually, Paul is referring to Christian teachers, not all believers: “I (Paul) laid a foundation, and another (Apollos) is building on it. But each man (any other Christian teacher/preacher) must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:10,11). This passage then is not about how each Christian disciple builds on the foundation which is Christ and His church. It is about how Christian teachers are to properly build on the foundation laid by Paul and the other apostles. In the words of Acts 2, just as the disciples literally devoted themselves to the apostles’ doctrine, Christian teachers must conform to apostolic doctrine both in motives (Paul mentions true Christian preachers with bad motives in Philippians 1) and teaching. The teaching here is faulty, not false for these teachers are saved but their works are burned.

There may be a case for a secondary application to all believers since those believers who follow the faulty teachers will in fact be missing the mark to the same degree that the teachers did. But that is not, in my opinion, the author’s intent in this paragraph. The Alfred Kuen quotation in this session actually affirms this point of view.

Session 5: Laying Hold of Christ (Phil 3:1-21)

In this last session of the first eight booklets, Jeff Reed focuses our attention on Paul’s main focus in life – to know Christ and to “...lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus” (3:12b). Paul states here that all mature members of the

body are to have this same attitude. While stated quite differently, this will accomplish what Paul spoke of in Ephesians 4:11-16 where every member of the body is to work properly so that the whole body grows up into Christ.

Concluding Evaluation

While it is obvious from this review that I disagree with Jeff Reed over several passage choices and interpretations in the *First Principles* Series, it is also clear that to date I have found no series that has so profoundly viewed the details of discipleship, home life, and church life in the light of the church's overall mission.

My training and pastoral ministry has focused my attention on all the details of doing church without completely grasping the driving purpose of all the details. BILD takes the entire Bible seriously but views the details in the light of our purpose as Christ's disciples within Christ's church. The so-called "great commission" is to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... and teaching them to observe all Christ's commands. According to Acts and the epistles, this is to occur in the context of planting and establishing churches. The BILD materials in general, and the *First Principles* in particular, help disciples and churches think seriously about their purpose here on earth and how they are to go about fulfilling that purpose according to Christ and His apostles.

APPENDIX K
SUMMARY CHART:
PLAN TO EQUIP DISCIPLES AND LEADERS WITH LINKS TO ASSESSMENT
CATEGORIES

Leader Groups	All Disciples	Teachers	Older Men	Older Women
Training Forums				
Main meeting of the church	(BP)Sermon: Main idea/1 application(MI/1ap) (S)Prayer:take notes/pray (S)Singing:from the heart to the Lord (P)Lord's supper:celebrate (S)Before/after mtg/one anothering	same as all disciples	same as all disciples	same as all disciples
Sunday School/ Small Group	Study/discussion,fellowship, pray, pastorcare Y1(BPS)1stPrI Y2(BPS)1stPrII Y3(B)OT/NT/WalkTh/GodPic (S)Gifts Y4(BPS)1stPrIII.1/Peacemaker Y5(BP)1stPrIII.2/HeartofEvan Y6(BP)1stPrIII.3/DecisionMak Y7(BPS)1stPrIII.4&5	same as all disciples	same as all disciples	same as all disciples
Mentoring	Small Group Older/Younger connections	Experinced teacher w/ inexperienced teacher	Older men/younger men visits	Older women/younger women visits
Special Courses Jan - Apr Tues or Wed pm Session 1 5:30 - 7:00 Meal 7:00 - 7:30 Session 2 7:30 - 9:00	(BPS)NTPrin of Church (BP)Marriage (BP)Parenting (BPS)Finances (BS)Worldview	(B)SysBib/Theo Walk Thru the Bible OT/NT	(B)Sys/BibTheology Walk Thru the Bible OT/NT	(B)Sys/BibTheology Walk Thru the Bible OT/NT
Focused Ministry Service Opportunities Based on gifts/ abilities	(S)Evangelism/church plant (S)Worship teams (S)Mentor/counsel (S)Teacher/leader	(S)Teaching	(S)Mentoring younger men	(S)Mentoring younger women
Scheduled meetings (May - Dec) Elders Meetings Deacons Meetings Worship Team Teachers	(S)Monthly worship team practice	semi-annual training/eval. meetings	(S)Mentoring training for older men/women	(S)Mentoring training for older men/women
Special seminars retreat/event	Issues/Topics as needed Annual seminar: Biblical manhood/womanhood	same as all disciples	(BP)Annual Seminar Biblical Manhood for all men	(BP)Annual Seminar Biblical womanhood for all women

Key to Assessment Categories: (B)Beliefs, (P)Practice, (S)Service

Leader Groups	Deacons	Elders	Minister of the gospel
Training Forums			
Main meeting of the church	(BP)Sermon:Main Idea/1 application (S)Prayer:Notes/pray (S)Singing:(fthttL) (P)Lord's supper:celebrate (S)Before/after meeting:one anothering	same as deacons	same as deacons
Sunday School/ Small Group	Study/discussion,fellowship, pray, pastorcare (pc) Y1(BPS)1PrI Y2(BPS)1PrII Y3(B)OT/NT/WalkTh/GodPic (S)Gifts Y4(BPS)1PrIII.1/Peacemaker Y5(BP)1PrIII.2/HeartofEvan Y6(BP)1PrIII.3/DecisionMak Y7(BPS)1PrIII.4&5	same as deacons	same as deacons
Mentoring	P/T with deacon Giftedness (A Miller book)	P/T with elder: giftedness (A Miller book) Elder with faithful man	P/T with Min of Gospel Giftedness (A Miller book) Sermon passage discussion Min of Gospel w/ faithful man
Special Courses Jan - Apr Tues or Wed pm 5:30 - 7:00 Session 1 7:00 - 7:30 Meal 7:30 - 9:00 Session 2	Y1(BPS)Acts Y2 (BPS)Pauline Y3(BS)Leaders&EarlyChurch (L&EC)	Y1(BPS)Acts Y2 (BPS)Pauline Y3(BS)L&EC	Y1(BPS)Acts Y2 (BPS)Pauline Y3(BS)L&EC Y4(BS)Interpl Y5(BS)Essentials Y6(S)Pr&Teach
Focused Ministry Service Opportunities Based on gifts/ abilities	(S)Service to body as directed by elders	(S)Lead Small Group (S)Pray for CBC families Mission of CBC Elder/deacon team Missions	(S)Lead small group (S)Sermons(prepare,teach, evaluations) (S)Teach a leadership class
Scheduled meetings (May - Dec) Elders Meetings Deacons Meetings Worship Team Teachers	Y1(S)Deacons(T Keller) Y2(P)Char of a Leader Y3(B)SysBibTheo/Walk Through the Bible	Y1(S)Teach 1st Prin Y2(P)Char of a Leader Y3(B)SysBibTheo/Walk Through the Bible	Y1(S)Teach 1st Prin Y2(P)Char of a Leader Y3(B)SysBibTheo/Walk Through the Bible
Special seminars retreat/event	(BPS)BILD International Summit	(BPS)BILD International Summit	(BPS)BILD International Summit

Key to Assessment Categories: (B)Beliefs, (P)Practice, (S)Service

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